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No. 9

FAMOUS Science Fiction

TALES OF WONDER

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THE DERELICT OF SPACE
by RAY CUMMINGS

THE FORGOTTEN PLANET
by SEWELL PEASELEE WRIGHT

SPACE STORM
A New Story
by HARL VINCENT

JOHN KENDRICK BANGS

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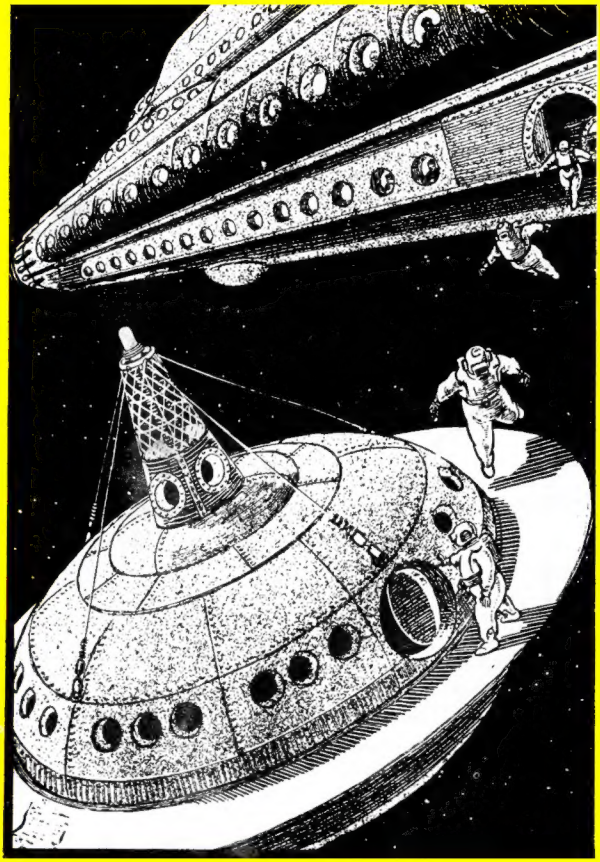

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FAMOUS
Science Fiction
TALES OF WONDER

Volume 2 *Number 3*

Robert A. W. Lowndes, *Editor* *Cover by Paul*

Editorial Consultants:

Robert A. Madle **Sam Moskowitz**

CONTENTS FOR SPRING

NOVELETS

THE FORGOTTEN PLANET . . . . . *Sewell Peaslee Wright* 8
THE DERELICT OF SPACE . . . . . *Ray Cummings* 94

SHORT STORIES

A GLANCE AHEAD . . . . . *John Kendrick Bangs* 36
SPACE STORM . . . . . *Harl Vincent* 50
DEATH FROM THE STARS . . . . . *A. Rowley Hilliard* 72

SPECIAL FEATURES AND DEPARTMENTS

DOWN TO EARTH (Where We Get Together) 4
JOHN KENDRICK BANGS — FORGOTTEN MASTER
. . . . . *Richard A. Lupoff* 32
BOUND TO BE READ (Book Reviews) 49
THE BORDERS OF "SCIENCE FICTION" (editorial)
. . . . . *Robert A. W. Lowndes* 66
THE RECKONING (on our 7th and 8th issues) 90
FIRST FANDOM (special feature) . . . . . *Robert A. Madle* 91
READERS' PREFERENCE PAGE (double-barrelled) 129/130

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Down To Earth

The editorial page of the Spring 1931 issue of *WONDER STORIES QUARTERLY* announced something new and different in science fiction magazines (Gernsback was constantly doing something new and different): an Interplanetary "Plot" Contest. By this time WSQ was about to become an exclusive "interplanetary" science fiction magazine; not that interplanetary stories would thereafter be barred from the monthly *WONDER STORIES,* but that WSQ would offer this bonus for fans who just couldn't get enough off-the-world tales. Seven prizes were announced, ranging from $50 for the first prize to $2.50 for the sixth and seventh, for the best plots received from readers. "From the plots we receive, we will select the best and submit these plots to authors whom we think best suited to develop the story. The author will write the story, using the plot submitted by our reader, and the story will be signed jointly by the author as well as the reader who supplied the plot. It is a novel idea and we believe you will like it. This, then, is a get-together for readers and authors and we are certain that some interesting results will come from this contest. The 'plot' contest is meant only for our readers and no author who has previously had any story published is eligible for it . . . The plot outlines must be for interplanetary stories, and must not exceed 500 words."

In the Summer 1931 issue, we learned that the winner of the first prize was William Thurmond, and the editor claimed that the contest had been most successful, several thousand entries having been received. Prize-winning plots were not published, of course; and all we were told then was that the forthcoming issue would contain the story which some author would be commissioned

to write around Reader Thurmond's plot. So it was not until mid-September 1931 that we saw the Fall 1931 issue of WSQ, containing *The Derelict of Space,* by Ray Cummings. Just how much Thurmond actually had in his plot, we can never be sure; there is only this hint from the editorial page of the Summer issue: "It is noteworthy, and we are happy to say it, that it is not always quantity that makes for success. In fact the first prize, awarded to Mr. Thurmond, was for one of the shortest plots published. (sic) By actual word count, the entry contained only 137 words. But then, of course, it was because of the originality of the idea that the editors awarded Mr. Thurmond the first prize." Obviously that word "published" should have been "received".

In the light of what Lester del Rey wrote in his Guest Editorial, last issue, it's interesting to note that there is one crucial difference between this story of failure and defeat and the contemporary anti-hero tale, aside from stylistic differences: Deely has dignity; the contemporary anti-hero is either a puppet jerked hither and yon or a pig being fattened for slaughter, and dignity is something of which he knows nothing. (Likely as not he confuses it with pomposity.) Ray Cummings knew what dignity was, which is something I doubt can be said about various big names both in mainstream and science fiction today.

"You actually insult genuine science, cast reflections on true science, by preaching the impossible doctrine of evolution. The world's greatest biologists and scientists of every kind have repudiated the theory of the evolution of man as false; and yet your magazine is aligned with all the pseudo-scientists who still believe in that ridiculous theory. That chiefly, is the reason why I placed *Into the Subconscious* into the fourth and last place in my category; because such stories insult the intelligence of thinking people."

The above is a paragraph from a letter which appeared in the February, 1930 issue of *SCIENCE WONDER STORIES,* referring to the cover story by (The Rev.) Ray Avery Myers, in the October 1929 issue, wherein the subject of an experiment has his consciousness sent back into time, and what he "remembers" is projected onto a screen; eventually he projects memories of life as a non-human being. The January 1930 issue had run a letter of objection from a Fundamentalist.

This was just a little less than five years after the world-famous trial in Tennessee, where a young teacher named John Scopes agreed to be the subject of a test case, challenging the constitutionality of a law passed by the State Legislature which effectively prohibited the teaching of Darwinian Theory in the public schools. L. Sprague de Camp, who has written many fine books on scientific subjects, has covered this fantastic episode in a new, long, and entirely fascinating volume published by Doubleday, 1968. Don't miss *The Great Monkey Trial;* it's worth every penny of the $6.95 that the publishers ask for it, for it is a thorough survey of the period and the personalities connected with the trial in every way. Not a dull moment from start to end.

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Quite a number of readers responded to the invitation to see if they could pick out of the "fundamental flaw" in *Why The Heavens Fell,* by Epaminondas T. Snooks, D. T. G. (C. P. Mason), which we ran in our last issue. This, I now confess, was a deliberate trap: I was curious as to how many would overlook the fact that the story was a burlesque where, in order to chide science fiction writers of the time who were blithely writing stories with little or no regard for fundamental, elementary scientific facts, the author deliberately based his story on an absurdity. The proposition that the U.S. Congress could repeal a law of the universe therefore is the "given" element in this story, and is *not* the fundamental flaw.

A story which deliberately selects a contradiction to generally known scientific fact and offers some justification for this contradiction is to be taken on its own terms, and faulted only if what proceeds from the "given" based just isn't logical. What the authors that Mr. Mason was burlesquing were doing was writing either in utter ignorance of the facts, or lack of concern for them. It's entirely logical, in an Alice-in-Wonderlandish line of reasoning to postulate that if Congress has the power to repeal the Law of Inverse Squares, then that power extends only to the borders of U.S. territory at the time. (Actually, Mason really should have gone a little farther, as U.S. embassies in foreign countries are also considered as Territory of the United States, too!)

Those who did not fall into the trap all said substantially the same thing in the same way, so it seems only just under these circumstances to reward the reader whose correct

statement reached me first (I put a date on this letter).

Fred Schobert, RD #3, Lewisburg, Penna., 17837 is the winner, then. He writes: "The flaw in *Why The Heavens Fell* is as follows. The story is written in the first person meaning that the person was in the United States at the time of these events. Now since the U.S. and all its insular possessions (including Alaska) were 'utterly, instantly consumed', the person who wrote the story could not live to tell about it!"

We regret that circumstances similar to those which forced us temporarily to take *MAGAZINE OF HORROR* off our regular schedule a few years back have now made it necessary to do the same thing with *FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION.* We cannot therefore, as originally planned, put Mr. Schobert on our subscription list, since for the time being we are not accepting further subscriptions or renewals to FSF; however, his name will go on my private complimentary list for six issues starting with this one; and complimentary copies of this issue will also be sent to the others who answered the question correctly.

Richard Bergeron, editor of *WARHOON,* which was awarded a Hugo at the 1962 (20th) World Science Fiction Convention, under the "amateur magazine" category, writes: "In *Science Fiction as Delight,* I was delighted with the statement that 'Heinlein and Blish are still developing--a wonderful thing to see, since both have passed the point where they have to progress in order to keep selling. Both could now be coasting along, refining this and that bit

(Turn To Page 121)

Did You Miss Our Earlier Issues?

While They Last, Here Are The Contents

#1, Winter 1966/67: "The Girl in the Golden Atom", Ray Cummings; "The City of Singing Flame", Clark Ashton Smith; "Voice of Atlantis", Laurence Manning; "The Plague", George H. Smith; "The Question", J. Hunter Holly.

#2, Spring 1967: "The Moon Menace", Edmond Hamilton; "Dust", Wallace West; "The White City", David H. Keller, M.D.; "Rimghost", A. Bertram Chandler; "Seeds From Space", Laurence Manning.

#3, Summer 1967: "Beyond the Singing Flame", Clark Ashton Smith; "Disowned", Victor Endersby; "A Single Rose", Jon DeCles; "The Last American", J.A. Mitchell, "The Man Who Awoke", Laurence Manning.

#4, Fall 1967: "Master of the Brain", Laurence Manning; "Do Not Fold or Mutilate", William M. Danner; "The Last Shrine", Chester D. Cuthbert; "The Times We Had", Edward D. Hoch; "Master of the Octopus", Edward Olin Weeks, "The City of Spiders", H. Warner Munn.

#5, Winter 1967/68: "The Pygmy Planet", Jack Williamson; "Destroyers", Greg D. Bear; "The City of Sleep", Laurence Manning; "Echo", William F. Temple; "Plane People", Wallace West.

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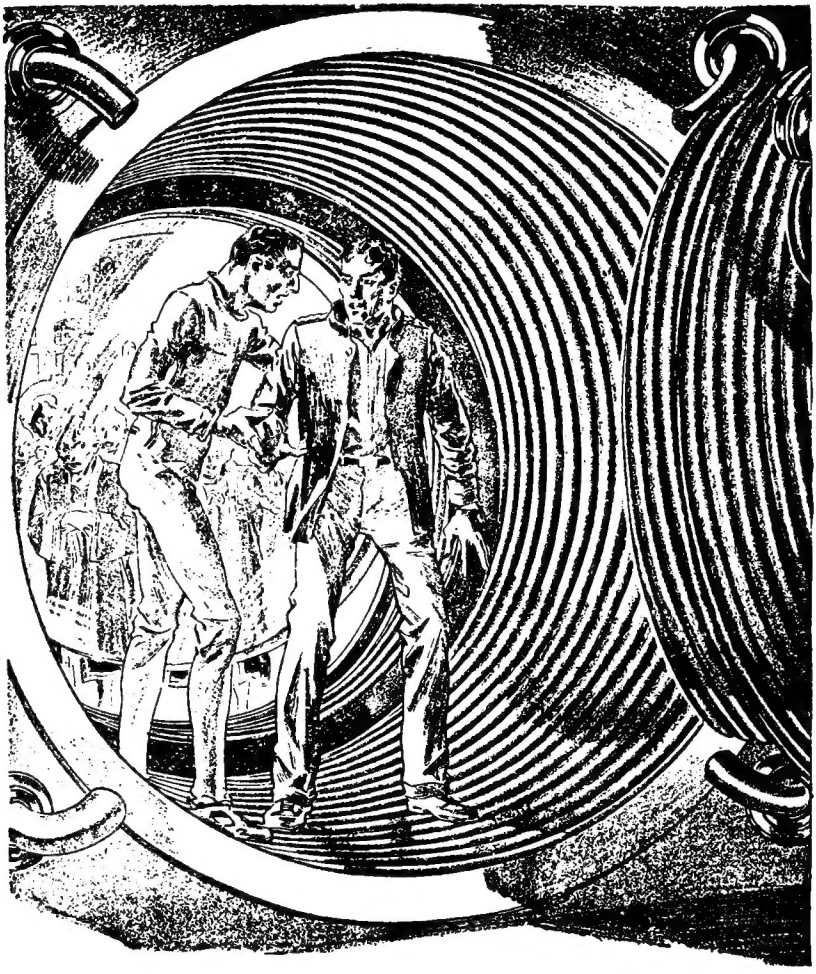
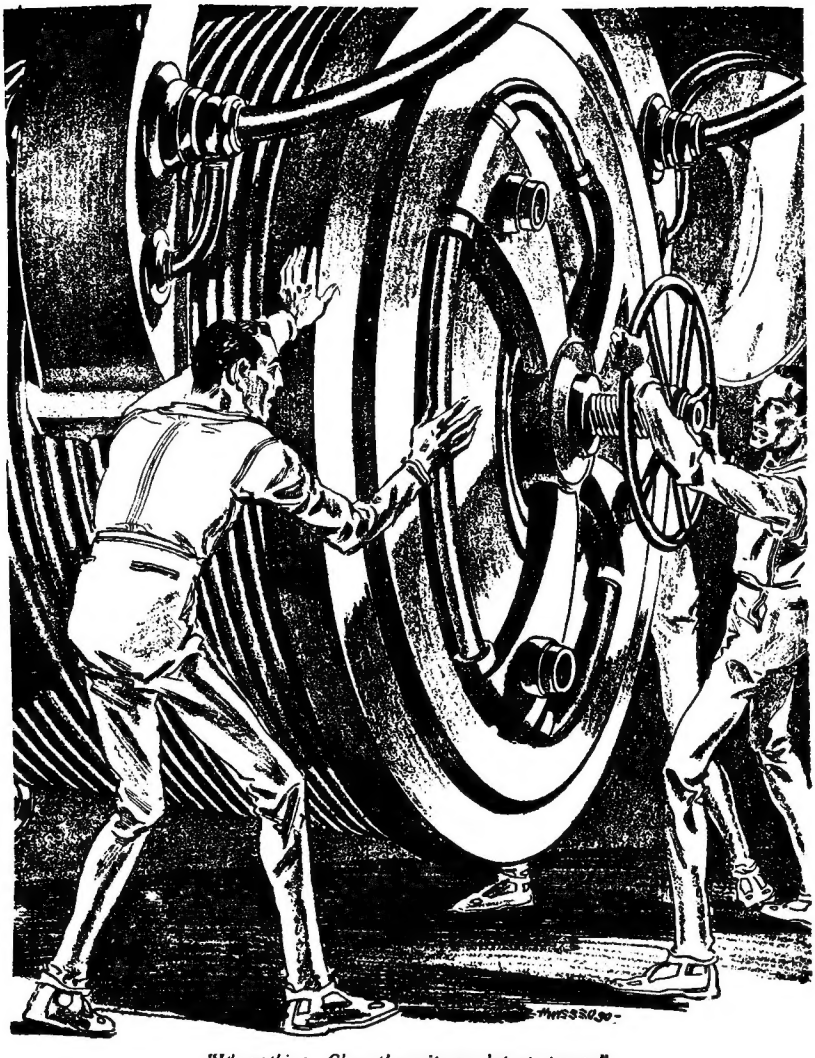


The Forgotten Planet

by SEWELL PEASLEE WRIGHT



"It's nothing. Close the exit; we depart at once."

(illustration by H. W. Wesso.)

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The Forgotten Planet

By Sewell Peaslee Wright

The name of this world had been stricken from all records, actual and mental. But one man remembered the story of the Forgotten Planet, and was asked to write its history briefly.

I HAVE BEEN ASKED TO RECORD, plainly and without prejudice, a brief history of the Forgotten Planet.

That this record, when completed, will be sealed in the archives of the Interplanetary Alliance and remain there, a secret and rather dreadful bit of history, is no concern of mine. I am an old man, well past the century mark, and what disposal is made of my work is of little importance to me. I grow weary of life and living, which is good. The fear of death was lost when our scientists showed us how to live until we grew weary of life. But I am digressing—an old man's failing.

The Forgotten Planet was not always so named. The name that it once bore, as every child knows, has stricken from the records of the Universe, actual and mental. It is well that evil should not be remembered. But in order that this history may be clear in the centuries to come, my record should go back to beginnings.

So far as the Universe is concerned, the history of the Forgotten Planet begins with the visit of the first craft ever to span the space between the worlds: the crude, adventuresome *Edorn,* whose name, as well as the names of the nine Zenians who manned her, occupy the highest places in the roll of honor of the Universe.

Ame Baove, the commander and historian of the *Edorn,* made but brief comment on his stop at the Forgotten Planet. I shall record it in full:

"We came to rest upon the surface of this, the fourth of the planets visited during the first trip of the *Edorn,* eighteen spaces before the height of the sun. We found ourselves surrounded immediately by vast numbers of creatures very different from

SEWELL PEASLEE WRIGHT came to the attention of *WEIRD TALES* readers in the February 1926 issue, with a story entitled, *The Thing in the Glass Box.* He did not appear in science fiction magazines, however, until 1930, where *Out of the Ocean's Depths* was published in the March issue of *ASTOUNDING STORIES OF SUPER SCIENCE.* A sequel, *Into the Ocean's Depths,* led off the May issue (with a few exceptions, a short story, rather than a novelet or the first installment of a serial, led off AS during the Clayton regime.) Then, with the July number, *The Forgotten Planet,* began the Commander John Hanson series, and S. P. Wright would have only one story outside that series, *The Infra-Medians,* in the December 1931 issue. John Hanson and the Special Patrol was a most popular series, and these stories would run in alternate issues with Col. (then Captain) S. P. Meek's "Dr. Bird" stories. Ten Commander Hanson stories appeared, the final one, *The Death Traps of F-X-37,* in the last issue published under the Clayton banner (March 1933). There were requests for a continuance of the series when the magazine was revived by Street & Smith, but either Mr. Wright did not submit any further manuscripts to the magazine, or Editor Tremaine did not consider them good enough.

ourselves, and from their expressions and gestures, we gathered that they were both curious and unfriendly.

"Careful analysis of the atmosphere proved it to be sufficiently similar to our own to make it possible for us to again stretch our legs outside the rather cramped quarters of the *Edorn,* and tread the soil of still another world.

"No sooner had we emerged, however, than we were angrily beset by the people of this unfriendly planet, and rather than do them injury, we retired immediately, and concluded our brief observations through our ports.

"The topography of this planet is similar to our own, save that there are no mountains, and the flora is highly colored almost without exception, and apparently quite largely parasitical in nature. The people are rather short in stature, with hairless heads and high foreheads. Instead of being round or oval, however, the heads of these people rise to a rounded ridge which runs back from a point between and just above the eyes, nearly to the nape of the neck behind. They give evidence of a fair order of intelligence, but are suspicious and unfriendly. From the number and size of the cities we saw, this planet is evidently thickly populated.

"We left about sixteen spaces before the height of the sun,

and continued towards the fifth and last planet before our return to Zenia."

This report, quite naturally, caused other explorers in space to hesitate. There were so many friendly, eager worlds to visit, during the years that relations between the planets were being established, that an unfriendly people were ignored.

However, from time to time, as spaceships became perfected and more common, parties from many of the more progressive planets did call. Each of them met with the same hostile reception, and at last, shortly after the second War of the Planets, the victorious Alliance sent a fleet of the small but terrible Deuber Spheres, convoyed by four of the largest of the disintegrator ray-ships, to subjugate the Forgotten Planet.

Five great cities were destroyed, and the Control City, the seat of the government, was menaced before the surly inhabitants conceded allegiance to the Alliance. Parties of scientists, fabricators, and workmen were then landed, and a dictator was appointed.

From all the worlds of the Alliance, instruments and equipment were brought to the Forgotten Planet. A great educational system was planned and executed, the benign and kindly influence of the Alliance made every effort to improve the conditions existing on the Forgotten Planet, and to win the friendship and allegiance of these people.

For two centuries the work went on. Two centuries of bloodshed, strife, hate and disturbance. Nowhere else within the known Universe was there ill feeling. The second awful War of the Planets had at last succeeded in teaching the lesson of peace.

Two centuries of effort—wasted effort. It was near the end of the second century that my own story begins.

Commander at that time of the super-cruiser *Tamon*, a Special Patrol ship of the Alliance, I was not at all surprised to receive orders from the Central Council to report at emergency speed. Special Patrol work in those days, before the advent of the present de-centralized system, was a succession of false starts, hurried recalls, and urgent, emergency orders.

I obeyed at once. In the Special Patrol service, there is no questioning orders. The planet Earth, from which I sprang, is and always has been proud of the fact that from the very beginning, her men have been picked to command the ships of the Special Patrol. No matter how dangerous, how forlorn and hopeless the mission given to a commander of a Special Patrol ship, history has never recorded that any commander has ever

hesitated. That is why our uniforn of blue and silver commands the respect that it does even in this day and age of softening and decadence, when men—but again an old man digresses. And perhaps it is not for me to judge.

I pointed the blunt nose of the *Tamon* at Zenia, seat of the Cental Council, and in four hours, Earth time, the great craft swept over the gleaming city of the Central Council and settled swiftly to the court before the mighty, columned Hall of the Planets.

Four pages of the Council, in their white and scarlet livery, met me and conducted me instantly to a little ante-room behind the great council chamber.

There were three men awaiting me there; three men whose faces, at that time, were familiar to every person in the known Universe.

Kellen, the oldest of the three, and the spokesman, rose as I entered the room. The others did likewise, as the pages closed the heavy doors behind me.

"You are prompt, and that is good," thought Kellen. "I welcome you. Remove now thy menore."

I glanced up at him swiftly. This must surely be an important matter, that I was asked to remove my menore band.

It will, of course, be understood that at that time we had but a bulky and clumsy instrument to enable us to convey and receive thought; a device consisting of a heavy band of metal, in which were imbedded the necessary instruments and a tiny atomic energy generator, the whole being worn as a circlet or crown upon the head.

Wonderingly, I removed my menore, placed it upon the long, dark table around which the three men were standing, and bowed. Each of the three, in turn, lifted their gleaming circlets from their heads, and placed them likewise upon the table before them.

"You wonder," said Kellen, speaking of course, in the soft and liquid universal language, which is, I understand, still disseminated in our schools, as it should be. "I shall explain as quickly and as briefly as possible.

"We have called you here on a dangerous mission. A mission that will require tact and quickness of mind as well as bravery. We have selected you, have called you, because we are agreed that you possess the qualities required. Is it not so?" He glanced at his two companions, and they nodded gravely, solemnly, without speaking.

"You are a young man, John Hanson," continued Kellen, "but your record in your service is one of which you can be proud. We trust you

—with knowledge that is so secret, so precious, that we must revert to speech in order to convey it; we dare not trust it, even in this protected and guarded place, to the menore's quicker but less discreet communication."

He paused for a moment, frowning thoughtfully as though dreading to begin. I waited silently, and at last he spoke again.

"There is a world"—and he named a name which I shall not repeat, the name of the Forgotten Planet—"that is a festering sore upon the body of the Universe. As you know, for two centuries we have tried to pass on to these people an understanding of peace and friendship. I believe that nothing has been left undone. The Council and the forces behind it have done everything within their power. And now—"

He stopped again, and there was an expression of deepest pain written upon his wise and kindly face. The pause was for but an instant.

"And now," he went on firmly, "it is at an end. Our work has been undone. Two centuries of effort—undone. They have risen in revolt, they have killed all those sent by the Alliance of which this Council is the governing body and the mouthpiece, and they have sent us an ultimatum—a threat of war!"

"What?"

Kellen nodded his magnificent old head gravely.

"I do not wonder that you start," he said heavily. "War! It must not be. It cannot be! And yet, war is what they threaten."

"But sir!" I put in eagerly. I was young and rash in those days. "Who are they, to make war against a united Universe?"

"I have visited your planet, Earth," said Kellen, smiling very faintly. "You have a tiny winged insect you call *bee.* Is it not so?"

"Yes."

"The bee is a tiny thing, of little strength. A man, a little child, might crush one to death between a thumb and finger. But the bee may sting before he is crushed, and the sting may linger on for days, a painful and unpleasant thing. Is that not so?"

"I see, sir," I replied, somewhat abashed before the tolerant, kindly wisdom of this great man. "They cannot hope to wage successful war, but they may bring much suffering to others."

"Much suffering," nodded Kellen, still gently smiling. "And we are determined that this thing shall not be. Not"—and his face grew gray with a terrible and bitter resolve—"not if we have to bring to bear upon that dark and unwilling world the disintegrating rays of every ship of the

Alliance, so that the very shell of the planet shall disappear, and no life ever again shall move upon its surface.

"But this," and he seemed to shudder at the thought, "is a terrible and a ruthless thing even to contemplate. We must first try once again to point out to them the folly of their ways. It is with this mission that we would burden you, John Hanson."

"It is no burden, but an honor, sir," I said quietly.

"Youth! Youth!" Kellen chided me gently. "Foolish, yet rather glorious. Let me tell you the rest, and then we shall ask for your reply again.

"The news came to us by a small scout ship attached to that unhappy world. It barely made the journey to Jaron, the nearest planet, and crashed so badly, from lack of power, that all save one man were killed.

"He, luckily, tore off his menore, and insisted in speech that he be brought here. He was obeyed, and, in a dying condition, was brought to this very chamber." Kellen glanced swiftly, sadly, around the room, as though he could still visualize that scene.

"Every agent of the Alliance upon that hateful planet was set upon and killed, following the working out of some gigantic and perfectly executed plan—all save the crew of this one tiny scout ship, which was spared to act as a messenger.

"'Tell your great Council, was the message these people sent to us, 'that here is rebellion. We do not want, nor will we tolerate, your peace. We have learned now that upon other worlds than ours there are great riches. These we shall take. If there is resistance, we have a new and a terrible death to deal. A death that your great scientists will be helpless against; a horrible and irresistible death that will make desolate and void of intelligent life any world where we are forced to sow the seeds of ultimate disaster.

"'We are not yet ready. If we were, we would not move, for we prefer that your Council have time to think about what is surely to come. If you doubt that we have the power to do what we have threatened to do, send one ship, commanded by a man whose word you will trust, and we will prove to him that these are no empty words.'

"That, as nearly as I can remember it," concluded Kellen, "is the message. The man who brought it died almost before he had finished.

"That is the message. You are the man we have picked to accept their challenge. Remember, though, that there are but the four of us in this room. There are but four of us who know these things. If you for any reason do not wish to accept this mission, there will be none to judge you, least of all, any one of us, who know best of all the perils."

"You say, sir," I said quietly, although my heart was pounding in my throat, and roaring in my ears, "that there would be none to judge me.

"Sir, there would be myself. There could be no more merciless judge. I am honored that I have been selected for this task, and I accept the responsibility willingly, gladly. When is it your wish that we should start?"

The three presiding members of the Council glanced at each other, faintly smiling, as though they would say, as Kellen had said a short ime before: "Youth! Youth!" Yet I believe they were glad and somewhat proud that I had replied as I did.

"You may start," said Kellen, "as soon as you can complete the necessary preparations. Detailed instructions will be given you later."

He bowed to me, and the others did likewise. Then Kellen picked up his menore and adjusted it.

The interview was over.

"WHAT DO YOU MAKE IT?" I asked the observer. He glanced up from his instrument.

"Jaron, sir. Three degrees to port; elevation between five and six degrees. Approximate only, of course, sir."

"Good enough. Please ask Mr. Barry to hold to his present course. We shall not stop at Jaron."

The observer glanced at me curiously, but he was too well disciplined to hesitate or ask questions.

"Yes, sir!" he said crisply, and spoke into the microphone beside him.

None of us wore menores when on duty, for several reasons. Our instruments were not nearly as perfect as those in use today, and verbal orders were clearer and carried more authority than mental instructions. The delicate and powerful electrical and atomic mechanism of our ship interfered with the functioning of the menores, and at that time the old habit of speech was far more firmly entrenched, due to hereditary influence, than it is now.

I nodded to the man, and made my way to my own quarters. I wished most heartily that I could talk over my plans with someone, but this had been expressly forbidden.

"I realize that you trust your men, and more particularly your officers," Kellen had told me during the course of his parting conversation with me. "I trust them also — yet we must remember that the peace of mind of

the Universe is concerned. If news, even a rumor, of this threatened disaster should become known, it is impossible to predict the disturbance it might create.

"Say nothing to anyone. It is your problem. You alone should leave the ship when you land; you alone shall hear or see the evidence they have to present, and you alone shall bring word of it to us. That is the wish of the Council."

"Then it is my wish," I had said, and so it had been settled.

Aft, in the crew's quarters, a gong sounded sharply; the signal for changing watches, and the beginning of a sleep period. I glanced at the remote control dials that glowed behind their glass panel on one side of my room. From the registered attraction of Jaron, at our present speed, we should be passing her within, according to Earth time, about two hours. That meant that their outer patrols might be seeking our business, and I touched Barry's attention button, and spoke into the microphone beside my bunk.

"Mr. Barry? I am turning in for a little sleep. Before you turn over the watch to Eitel, will you see that the nose rays are set for the Special Patrol code signal for this enar? We shall be close to Jaron shortly."

"Yes, sir! Any other orders?"

"No. Keep her on her present course. I shall take the watch from Mr. Eitel."

Since there have been changes since those days, and will undoubtedly be others in the future, it might be well to make clear, in a document such as this, that at this period, all ships of the Special Patrol Serive identified themselves by means of invisible rays flashed in certain sequences, from the two nose, or forward, projectors. These code signals were changed every enar, a period of time arbitarily set by the Council; about eighteen days, as time is measured on the Earth, and divided into ten periods, as at present, known as enarens. These were further divided into enaros, thus giving us a time-reckoning system for use in space, corresponding roughly to the months, days and hours of the Earth.

I retired, but not to sleep. Sleep would not come. I knew, of course, that if curious outer patrol ships from Jaron did investigate us, they would be able to detect our invisible ray code signal, and thus satisfy themselves that we were on the Council's business. There would be no difficulty on that score. But what I should do after landing upon the rebellious sphere, I had not the slightest idea.

"Be stern, indifferent to their threats," Kellen had counseled me, "but

do everything within your power to make them see the folly of their attitude. Do not threaten them, for they are a surly people, and you might precipitate matters. Swallow your pride if you must; remember that yours is a gigantic responsibility, and upon the information you bring us may depend the salvation of millions. I am convinced that they are not—you have a word in your language that fits exactly. Not pretending . . . what is the word?"

"Bluffing?" I had supplied in English, smiling.

"Right! Bluffing. It is a very descriptive word. I am sure they are not bluffing."

I was sure of it also. They knew the power of the Alliance; they had been made to feel it more than once. A bluff would have been a foolish thing, and these people were not fools. In some lines of research they were extraordinarily brilliant.

But what could their new, terrible weapon be? Rays we had; at least half a dozen rays of destruction; the terrible dehydrating ray of the Deuber Spheres, the disintegrating ray that dated back before Ame Baove and his first voyage into space, the concentrated ultra-violent ray that struck men down in fiery torment . . . No, it could hardly be a new ray that was their boasted weapon.

What, then? Electricity had even then been exhausted of its possibilites. Atomic energy had been released, harnessed, and directed. Yet it would take fabulous time and expense to make these machines of destruction do what they claimed they would do.

Still pondering the problem, I did fall at last into a fitful travesty of sleep.

I was glad when the soft clamor of the bell aft announced the next change of watch. I rose, cleared the cobwebs from my brain with an icy shower, and made my way directly to the navigating room.

"Everything tidy, sir," said Eitel, my second officer, and a Zenian. He was thin and very dark, like all Zenians, and had the high, effeminate voice of that people. But he was cool and fearless and had the uncanny cerebration of his kind; I trusted him as completely as I trusted Barry, my first officer, who, like myself, was a native of Earth. "Will you take over?"

"Yes," I nodded, glancing at the twin charts beneath the ground glass top of the control table. "Get what sleep you can the next few enaros. Presently I shall want every man on duty and at his station."

He glanced at me curiously, as the observer had done, but saluted and

left with only a brief, "Yes, sir!" I returned the salute and turned my attention again to the charts.

The navigating room of an interplanetary ship is without doubt unfamiliar ground to most, so it might be well for me to say that such ships have, for the most part, twin charts, showing progress in two dimensions; to use land terms, lateral and vertical. These charts are really no more than large sheets of ground glass, ruled in both directions with fine black lines, representing all relatively close heavenly bodies by green lights of varying sizes. The ship itself is represented by a red spark, and the whole is, of course, entirely automatic in action, the instruments comprising the chart being operated by super-radio reflexes.

Jaron, the charts showed me at a glance, was now far behind. Almost directly above—it is necessary to resort to these unscientific terms to make my meaning clear—was the tiny world Elon, home of the friendly but impossibly dull winged people, the only ones in the known Universe. I was there but once, and found them almost laughably like our common dragon-flies on Earth; dragon-flies that grow some seven feet long, and with gauzy wings of amazing strength.

Directly ahead, on both charts, was a brilliantly glowing sphere of green—our destination. I made some rapid mental calculations, studying the few fine black lines between the red spark that was our ship, and the nearest edge of the great green sphere. I glanced at our speed indicator and the attraction meter. The little red slide that moved around the rim of the attraction meter was squarely at the top, showing that the attraction was from straight ahead; the great black hand was nearly a third of the way around the face.

We were very close; two hours would bring us into the atmospheric envelope. In less than two hours and a half, we would be in the Control City of what is now called the Forgotten Planet!

I glanced forward, through the thick glass partitions, into the operating room. Three men stood there, watching intently; they, too, were wondering why we visited the unfriendly world.

The planet itself loomed up straight ahead, a great half-circle, its curved rim sharp and bright against the empty blackness of space; the chord ragged and blurred. In two hours . . . I turned away and began a restless pacing.

An hour went by; an hour and a half. I pressed the attention button to the operating room, and gave orders to reduce our speed by half. We were very close to the outer fringe of the atmospheric envelope. Then,

keeping my eye on the big surface-temperature gauge, with its stubby red hand, I resumed my nervous pacing.

Slowly the thick red hand of the surface-temperature gauge began to move; slowly, and then more rapidly, until the eyes could catch its creeping.

"Reduce to atmospheric speed," I ordered curtly, and glanced down through a side port at one end of the long navigating room.

We were, at the moment, directly above the twilight belt. To my right, as I looked down, I could see a portion of the glistening southern ice cap. Here and there were the great flat lakes, almost seas, of the planet.

Our geographies of the Universe today do not show the topography of the Forgotten Planet; I might say, therefore, that the entire sphere was land area, with numerous great lakes embedded in its surface, together with many broad, very crooked rivers. As Ame Baove had reported, there were no mountains, and no high land.

"Altitude constant," I ordered. "Port three degrees. Stand by for further orders."

The ground seemed to whirl slowly beneath us. Great cities drifted astern, and I compared the scene below me with the great maps I took from our chart-case. The Control City should be just beyond the visible rim; well in the daylight area.

"Port five degrees," I said, and pressed the attention button to Barry's quarters.

"Mr. Barry, please call all men to quarters, including the off-duty watch, and then report to the navigating room. Mr. Eitel will be under my direct orders. We shall descend within the next few minutes."

"Very well, sir."

I pressed the attention button to Eitel's room. "Mr. Eitel, please pick ten of your best men and have them report at the forward exit. Await me, with the men, at that place. I shall be with you as soon as I turn the command over to Mr. Barry. We are descending immediately."

"Right, sir!" said Eitel.

I turned from the microphone to find that Barry had just entered the navigating room.

"We will descend into the Great Court of the Control City, Mr. Barry," I said. "I have a mission here. I am sorry, but these are the only instructions I can leave you.

"I do not know how long I shall be gone from the ship, but if I do not return within three hours, depart without me, and report directly to Kellen of the Council. To him, and no other. Tell him, verbally, what

took place. Should there be any concerted action against the *Tamon,* use your own judgment as to the action to be taken, remembering that the safety of the ship and its crew, and the report to the Council, are infintely more important than my personal welfare. Is that clear?"

"Yes, sir. Too damned clear."

I smiled and shook my head. "Don't worry," I said lightly. "I'll be back well within the appointed time."

"I hope so. But there's something wrong as hell here. I'm talking now as man-to-man; not to my commanding officer. I've been watching below, and I have seen at least two spots where large numbers of our ships have been destroyed. The remaining ships bear their own damned emblem where the crest of the Alliance should be—and was. What does it mean?"

"It means," I said slowly, "that I shall have to rely upon every man and officer to forget himself and myself, and obey orders without hesitation and without flinching. The orders are not mine, but direct from the Council itself." I held out my hand to him—an ancient Earth gesture of greeting, good-will and farewell—and he shook it vigorously.

"God go with you," he said softly, and with a little nod of thanks I turned and quickly left the room.

Eitel, with his ten men, were waiting for me at the forward exit. The men fell back a few paces and came to attention; Eitel saluted smartly. "We are ready, sir. What are your orders?"

"You are to guard this opening. Under no circumstances is anyone to enter save myself. I shall be gone not longer than three hours; if I am not back within that time, Mr. Barry has his orders. The exit will be sealed, and the *Tamon* will depart immediately, without me."

"Yes, sir. You will pardon me, but I gather that your mission is a dangerous one. May I not accompany you?"

I shook my head. "I shall need you here."

"But, sir, they are very excited and angry; I have been watching them from the observation ports. And there is a vast crowd of them around the ship."

"I had expected that. I thank you for your concern, but I must go alone. Those are the orders. Will you unseal the exit?"

His "Yes, sir!" was brisk and efficient, but there was a worried frown on his features as he unlocked and released the switch that opened the exit.

The huge plug of metal, some ten feet in diameter, revolved swiftly and noiselessly, backing slowly in its fine threads into the interior of the

ship, gripped by the ponderous gimbals which, as the last threads disengaged, swung the mighty disc to one side, like the door of some great safe.

"Remember your orders." I smiled, and with a little gesture to convey an assurance which I certainly did not feel, I strode through the circular opening out into the crowd. The heavy glass secondary door shot down behind me, and I was in the hands of the enemy.

THE FIRST THING I OBSERVED was that my menore, which I had picked up on my way to the exit, was not functioning. Not a person in all that vast multitude wore a monore; the five black-robed dignataries who marched to meet me wore none.

Nothing could have showed more clearly that I was in for trouble. To invite a visitor, as Kellen had done, to remove his menore first, was, of course, a polite and courteous thing to do if one wished communicate by speech; to remove the menore before greeting a visitor wearing one, was a tacit admission of rank enmity; a confession that one's thoughts were to be concealed.

My first impulse was to snatch off my own instrument and fling it in the solemn, ugly faces of the nearest of the five dignataries; I remembered Kellen's warning just in time. Quietly, I removed the metal circlet and tucked it under my arm, bowing slightly to the committee of five as I did so.

"I am Ja Ben," said the first of the five, with a malicious grin. "You are the representative of the Council that we commanded to appear?"

"I am John Hanson, commander of the ship *Tamon* of the Special Patrol Service. I am here to represent the Central Council," I replied with dignity.

"As we commanded," grinned Ja Ben. "That is good. Follow us and you shall have the evidence you were promised."

Ja Ben led the way with two of his black-robed followers. The other two fell in behind me. A virtual prisoner, I marched between them, through the vast crowd that made way grudgingly to let us pass.

I have seen the people of most of the planets of the known Universe. Many of them, to Earth notions, are odd. But these people, so much like us in many respects, were strangely repulsive.

Their heads, as Ame Baove had recorded, were not round like ours, but possessed a high bony crest that ran from between their lashless, browless eyes, down to the very nape of their necks. Their skin, even that covering their hairless heads, was a dull and papery white, like

parchment, and their eyes were abnormally small, and nearly round. A hateful, ugly people, perpetually scowling, snarling; their very voices resembled more the growl of wild beasts than the speech of intelligent beings.

Ja Ben led the way straight to the low but vast building of dun-colored stone that I knew was the administration building of the Control City. We marched up the broad, crowded steps, through the muttering, jeering multitude, into the building itself. The guards at the doors stood aside to let us through and the crowd at last was left behind.

A swift, cylindrical elevator shot us upward, into a great glass-walled laboratory, built like a sort of penthouse on the roof. Ja Ben walked quickly across the room towards a long, glass-topped table; the other four closed in on me silently but suggestively.

"That is unnecessary," I said quietly. "See, I am unarmed and completely in your power. I am here as an ambassador of the Central Council, not as a warrior."

"Which is as well for you," grinned Ja Ben. "What I have to show you, you can see quickly, and then depart."

From a great cabinet in one corner of the room he took a shiny cylinder of dark red metal, and held it up before him, stroking its sleek sides with an affectionate hand.

"Here it is," he said, chuckling. "The secret of our power. In here, safely imprisoned now, but capable of being released at our command, is death for every living thing upon any planet we choose to destroy." He replaced the great cylinder in the cabinet, and picked up in its stead a tiny vial of the same metal, no larger than my little finger, and not so long. "Here," he said, turning again towards me, "is the means of proving our power to you. Come closer!"

With my bodyguard of four watching every move, I approached.

Ja Ben selected a large hollow hemisphere of crystal glass and placed it upon a smooth sheet of flat glass. Next he picked a few blossoms from a bowl that stood, incongruously enough, on the table, and threw under the glass hemisphere.

"Flora," he grinned.

Hurrying to the other end of the room, he reached into a large flat metal cage and brought forth three small rodent like animals, natives of that world. These he also tossed carelessly under the glass.

"Fauna," he grunted, and picked up the tiny metal vial.

One end of the vial unscrewed. He turned the cap gently, carefully,

a strained, anxious look upon his face. My four guards watched him breathlessly, fearfully.

The cap came loose at last, disclosing the end of the tube, sealed with a grayish substance that looked like wax. Very quickly Ja Ben rolled the little cylinder under the glass hemisphere, and picked up a beaker that had been bubbling gently on an electric plate close by. Swiftly he poured the thick contents of the beaker around the base of the glass bell. The stuff hardened almost instantly, forming an air-tight seal between the glass hemisphere and the flat plate of glass upon which it rested. Then, with an evil, triumphant smile, Ja Ben looked up.

"*Flora,*" he repeated. "*Fauna.* And *death.* Watch! The little metal cylinder is plugged still, but in a moment that plug will disappear—simply a volatile solid, you understand. It is going rapidly . . . rapidly . . . it is almost gone now! Watch . . . In an instant now . . . *ah!*"

I saw the gray substance that stopped the entrance of the little metal vial disappear. The rodents ran around and over it, trying to find a crevice by which they might escape. The flowers, bright and beautiful, lay untidy on the bottom of the glass prison.

Then, just as the last vestige of the gray plug vanished, an amazing, a terrible thing happened. At the mouth of the tiny metal vial a greenish cloud appeared. I call it a cloud, but it was not that. It was solid, and it spread in every direction, sending out little needles that lashed about and ran together into a solid mass white millions of little needles reached out swiftly.

One of these little needles touched a scurrying animal. Instantly the tiny brute stiffened, and from his entire body the greenish needles spread swiftly. One of the flowers turned suddenly thick and pulpy with the soft green mass, then another, another of the rodents . . . *God!*

In the space of two heart beats, the entire hemisphere was filled with the green mass, that still moved and writhed and seemed to press against the glass sides as though the urge to expand was insistent, imperative . . .

"What is it?" I whispered, still staring at the thing.

"*Death!*" grunted Ja Ben, thrusting his hateful face close to mine, his tiny round eyes, with their lashless lids glinting. "Death, my friend. Go and tell your great Council of this death that we have created for every planet that will not obey us.

"We have gone back into the history of dealing death and have come back with a death such as the Universe has never known before!

"Here is a rapacious, deadly fungus we have been two centuries in developing. The spores contained in that tiny metal tube would be in-

visible to the naked eye—and yet given but a little time to grow, with air and vegetation and flesh to feed upon, and even that small capsule would wipe out a world. And in the cabinet,"—he pointed grinning triumphantly—"we have, ready for instant use, enough of the spores of this deadly fungus to wipe out all the worlds of your great Alliance.

"To wipe them out utterly!" he repeated, his voice shaking with a sort of frenzy now. "Every living thing upon their faces, wrapped in that thin, hungry green stuff you see there under that glass. All life wiped out; made uninhabitable so long as the Universe shall endure. And we—we shall be rulers, unquestioned, of that Universe. Tell your doddering Council *that!*" He leaned back against the table, panting with hate.

"I shall tell them all I have seen; all you have said."

"You believe we have the power to do all this?"

"I do—God help me, and the Universe," I said solemnly.

There was no doubt in my mind. I could see all too clearly how well their plans had been laid; how quickly this hellish growth would strangle all life, once its spores began to develop.

The only possible chance was to get back to the Council and make my report, with all possible speed, so that every available armed ship of the universe might concentrate here, and wipe out these people before they had time to—

"I know what you are thinking, my friend," broke in Ja Ben mockingly. "You might as well have worn the menore! You would have the ships of the Alliance destroy us before we have time to act. We had foreseen that, and have provided for the possibility.

"As soon as you leave here, ships, provided with many tubes like the one just used for our little demonstration, will be dispersed in every direction. We shall be in constant communication with those ships, and at the least sign of hostility, they will be ordered to depart and spread their death upon every world they can reach. Some of them you may be able to locate and eliminate; a number of them are certain to elude capture in infinite space—and if only one, one lone ship, should escape, the doom of the Alliance and millions upon millions of people will be pronounced.

"I warn you, it will be better, much better, to bow to our wishes, and pay us the tribute we shall demand. Any attempt at resistance will precipitate certain disaster for your Council and all the worlds the Council governs."

"At least, we would wipe you out first," I said hoarsely.

"True," nodded Ja Ben. "But the vengeance of our ships would be a terrible thing! You would not dare to take the chance!"

I stood there, staring at him in a sort of daze. What he had said was so true; terribly, damnably true.

If only—

There was but one chance I could see, and desperate as it was, I took it. Whirling the heavy metal ring of my menore in my hand, I sprang towards the table.

If I could break the sealed glass hemisphere, and loose the fungus upon its creators; deal to them the doom they had planned for the universe, then perhaps all might yet be well.

Ja Ben understood instantly what was in mind. He and his four aides leaped between me and the table, their tiny round eyes blazing with anger. I struck one of the four viciously with the menore, and with a gasp he fell back and slumped to the floor.

Before I could break through the opening, however, Ja Ben struck me full in the face with his mighty fist; a blow that sent me, dazed and reeling, into a corner of the room. I brought up with a crash against the cabinet there, groped wildly in an effort to steady myself, and fell to the floor. Almost before I struck, all four of them were upon me.

They hammered me viciously, shouted at me, cursed me in the universal tongue, but I paid no heed. I pretended to be unconscious, but my heart was beating high with sudden, glorious hope, and in my brain a terrible; merciless plan was forming.

When I had groped against the cabinet in an effort to regain my balance, my fingers had closed upon one of the little metal vials. As I fell, I covered that hand with my body and hastily hid the tiny tube in a deep pocket of my blue and silver Service uniform.

Slowly, after a few seconds, I opened my eyes and looked up at them, helplessly.

"Go, now!" snarled Ja Ben, dragging me to my feet. "Go, and tell your Council we are more than a match for you—and for them." He thrust me, reeling, towards his three assistants. "Take him to his ship, and send aid for Ife Rance, here." He glanced at the still unconscious figure of the victim of my menore, and then turned to me with a last warning.

"Remember, one thing more, my friend: you have the disintegrator ray equipment upon your ship. You have the little atomic bombs that won for the Alliance the Second War of the Planets. I know that. But if you make the slightest effort to use them, I shall dispatch a supply of the green death to our ships, and they will depart upon their missions at

once. You would take upon yourself a terrible responsibility by making the smallest hostile move.

"Go, now—and when you return, bring with you members of your great Council who will have the power to hear our demands, and see that they are obeyed. And do not keep us waiting over long, for we are an impatient race." He bowed, mockingly, and passed his left hand swiftly before his face, his people's sign of parting.

I nodded, not trusting myself to speak, and, hemmed in by my three black-robed conductors, was hurried down the elevator and back through the jeering mob to my ship.

THE GLASS SECONDARY DOOR shot up to permit me to enter, and Eitel gripped my shoulder anxiously, his eyes smoldering angrily.

"You're hurt, sir!" he said in his odd, high-pitched voice, staring into my bruised face. "What—"

"It's nothing," I assured him. "Close the exit immediately; we depart at once."

"Yes, sir!" He closed the switch, and the great threaded plug swung gently on its gimbals and began to revolve, swiftly and silently. A little bell sounded sharply, and the great door ceased its motion. Eitel locked the switch and returned the key to his pocket.

"Good. All men are at their stations?" I asked briskly.

"Yes, sir! All except these ten, detailed to guard the exit."

"Have them report to their regular stations. Issue orders to the ray operators that they are to instantly, and without further orders, destroy any ship that may leave the surface of this planet. Have every atomic bomb crew ready for an instant and concentrated offensive directed at the Control City, but command them not to act under any circumstances unless I give the order. Is that clear, Mr. Eitel?"

"Yes, sir!"

I nodded, and turned away, making my way immediately to the navigating room.

"Mr. Barry," I said quickly and gravely,"I believe that the fate of the known Universe depends upon us at this moment. We will ascend vertically, at once—slowly—until we are just outside the envelope, maintaining only sufficient horizontal motion to keep us directly over the Control City. Will you give the necessary orders?"

"Immediately, sir!" He passed the attention button to the operating

room and spoke swiftly into the microphone; before he completed the order I had left.

We were already ascending when I reached the port forward atomic bomb station. The man in charge, a Zenian, saluted with automatic precision and awaited orders.

"You have a bomb in readiness?" I asked, returning the salute.

"Those were my orders, sir."

"Correct. Remove it, please."

I waited impatiently while the crew removed the bomb from the releasing trap. It was withdrawn at last; a fish-shaped affair, very much like the ancient airplane bombs save that it was no larger than my two fists, placed one upon the other, and that it had four silvery wires running along its sides, from rounded nose to pointed tail, held at a distance from the body by a series of insulating struts.

"Now," I said, "how quickly can you put another object in the trap, re-seal the opening, and release the object?"

"While the Commander counts ten with reasonable speed," said the Zenian with pride. "We won first honors in the Special Patrol Service contests at the last Examination, the Commander may remember."

"I do remember. That is why I selected you for this duty."

With hands that trembled a little, I think, I drew forth the little vial of gleaming red metal, while the bombing crew watched me curiously.

"I shall unscrew the cap from this little vial," I explained, "and drop it immediately into the releasing trap. Re-seal the trap and release this object as quickly as it is possible to do so. If you can better the time you made to win the honors at the Examination—in God's name, do so!"

"Yes, sir!" replied the Zenian. He gave brisk orders to his crew, and each of the three men sprang alertly into position.

As quickly as I could, I turned off the cap of the little metal vial and dropped it into the trap. The heavy plug, a tiny duplicate of the exit door, clicked shut upon it and spun, whining gently, into the opening. Something clicked sharply, and one of the crew dropped a bar into place. As it shot home, the Zenian in command of the crew pulled the release plunger.

"Done, sir!" he said proudly.

I did not reply. My eye fixed upon the observation tube that was following the tiny missile to the ground.

The Control City was directly below us. I lost sight of the vial almost instantly, but the indicating cross-hairs showed me exactly where the vial would strike; at a point approximately halfway between the edge

of the city and the great squat pile of the administrating building, with its gleaming glass penthouse—the laboratory in which, only a few minutes befor, I had witnessed the demonstration of the death which awaited the Universe.

"Excellent!" I exclaimed. "Smartly done, men!" I turned and hurried to the navigating room, where the most powerful of our television discs was located.

The disc was not as perfect as those we have today; it was hooded to keep out exterior light, which is not necessary with the later instruments, and it was more unwieldy. However, it did its work, and did it well, in the hands of an experienced operator.

With only a nod to Barry, I turned the range hand to maximum, and brought it swiftly to bear upon that portion of the city in which the little vial had fallen. As I drew the focusing lever towards me, the scene leaped at me through the clear, glowing glass disc.

Froth! Green, billowing froth that grew and boiled and spread unceasingly. In places it reached high into the air, and it moved with an eager, inner life that was somehow terrible and revolting. I moved the range hand back, and the view seemed to drop away from me swiftly.

I could see the whole city now. All one side of it was covered with the spreading green stain that moved and flowed so swiftly. Thousands of tiny black figures were running in the streets, crowding away from the awful danger that menaced them.

The green patch spread more swiftly always. When I had first seen it, the edges were advancing as rapidly as a man could run; now they were fairly racing, and the speed grew constantly.

A ship, two of them, three of them, came darting from somewhere, towards the administration building, with its glass cupola. I held my breath as the deep, sudden humming from the *Tamon* told me that our rays were busy. Would they—

One of the enemy ships disappeared suddenly in a little cloud of dirty, heavy dust that settled swiftly. Another . . . and the third. Three little streaks of dust, falling, falling . . .

A fourth ship, and a fifth came rushing up, their sides faintly glowing from the speed they had made. The green flood thick and insistent, was racing up and over the administration racing up and over the administration building now. It reached the roof, ran swiftly . . .

The fourth ship shattered into dust. The fifth settled swiftly—and then that ship also disappeared, together with a corner of the building. Then the thick green stuff flowed over the whole building and there was nothing

to be seen there but a mound of soft, flowering, gray-green stuff that rushed on now with the swiftness of the wind.

I looked up, into Barry's face. "You're ill!" he said quickly. "Is there anything I can do, sir?"

"Yes," I said, forming the words with difficulty. "Give orders to ascend at emergency speed!"

For once my first officer hesitated. He glanced at the attraction meter and then turned to me again, wondering.

"At this height, sir, emergency speed will mean dangerous heating of the surface; perhaps—"

"I want it white hot, Mr. Barry. She is built to stand it. Emergency speed, please—immediately!"

"Right, sir!" he said briskly, and gave the order.

I felt my weight increase as the order was obeyed; gradually the familiar, uncomfortable feeling left me. Silently, Barry and I watched the big surface temperature gauge as it started to move. The heat inside became uncomfortable, grew intense. The sweat poured from us. In the operating room, forward, I could see the men casting quick, wondering glances up at us through the heavy glass partition that lay between.

The thick, stubby red hand of the surface temperature gauge moved slowly but steadily towards the heavy red line that mrked the temperature at which the outer shell of our hull would become incandescent. The hand was within three or four degrees of that mark when I gave Barry the order to arrest our motion.

When he had given the order, I turned to him and motioned towards the television disc.

"Look," I said.

He looked, and when at last he tore his face away from the hood, he seemed ten years older.

"What is it?". he asked in a choked whisper. "Why—they're being wiped out; the whole of that world—"

"True. And some of the seeds of that terrible death might have drifted upward, and found a lodging place upon the surface of our ship. That is why I ordered the emergency speed while we were still within the atmospheric envelope, Barry. To burn away that contamination, if it existed. Now we are safe, unless—"

I pressed the attention button to the station of the chief of the ray operators. "Your report," I ordered.

"Nine ships disintegrated, sir," he replied instantly. "Five before the city was destroyed; four later."

"You are certain that none escaped?"

"Positive, sir."

"Very good."

I turned to Barry, smiling. "Point her nose for Zenia, Mr. Barry," I said. "As soon as it is feasible, resume emergency speed. There are some very anxious gentlemen there awaiting our report, and I dare not convey it except in person."

"Yes, sir!" said Barry crisply.

This, then, is the history of the Forgotten Planet. On the charts of the Universe it appears as an unnamed world. No ship is permitted to pass close enough to it so that its attraction is greater than that of the nearest other mass. A permanent outpost of fixed-station ships, with headquarters upon Jaron, the closest world, is maintained by the Council.

There are millions of people who might be greatly disturbed if they knew of this potential menace that lurks in the midst of our Universe, but they do not know. The wisdom of the Council made certain of that.

But, in order that in the ages to come there might be a record of this matter, I have been asked to prepare this document for the sealed archives of the Alliance. It has been a pleasant task; I have relived, for a little time, a part of my youth.

The work is done, now, and that is well. I am an old man, and weary, Sometimes I wish I might live to see the wonders that the next generation or so will witness, but my years are heavy upon me.

My work is done.

DID YOU MISS OUR EARLIER ISSUES?

#6, Spring 1968: *The Hell Planet,* Leslie F. Stone; *The Individualists,* Laurence Manning; *More Than One Way,* Burt K. Filer; *The Invulnerable Scourge,* John Scott Campbell.

#7, Summer 1968: *Men of the Dark Comet,* Festus Pragnell; *The Elixir,* Laurence Manning; *Away From the Daily Grind,* Gerald W. Page, *The Fires Die Down,* Robert Silverberg; *Not By Its Cover,* Philip K. Dick.

#8, Fall 1968: *Dark Moon,* Charles Willard Diffin; *The Eld,* Miriam Allen deFord; *The Eternal Man,* D. D. Sharp; *The Maiden's Sacrifice,* Edward D. Hoch; *Why the Heavens Fell,* Epaminondas T. Snooks, D.T.G.; *Art or Artiness?,* Lester del Rey; *First Fandom,* Robert A. Madle.

ORDER FROM PAGE 128

John Kendrick Bangs --Forgotten Master Of Fantasy

(Introduction for "A Glance Ahead" by J. K. Bangs)

by RICHARD A. LUPOFF

Mr. Lupoff is a collector and expert upon the writings of many oldtime fantasy authors. His biography of Edgar Rice Burroughs is now available in a soft-cover edition published by Ace Books.

JOHN KENDRICK BANGS IS AN ANOMALY. A national celebrity in his day, a man whose works were very popular and whose lectures drew great audiences, a man who hobnobbed with the famous and the mighty—mention of his name nowadays will draw, most often, a puzzled "Who?"

He *is* remembered and his works collected by a small but enthusiastic coterie, composed mainly of people active in one aspect or another of the literary world. Vincent Starrett, the Chicago bookman and Sherlock Holmes expert, is a Bangs enthusiast; a newspaperman in Cleveland is another; as is a librarian, a San Francisco magazine editor, a film writer. Proprietors of used book stores report a steady demand for his works, of which only the most common half dozen or so are often to be found.

Bangs was born in Yonkers, New York, on May 27, 1862. He grew up in and around Yonkers and New York City, and there seemed no doubt as to the direction his career would take. As

an undergraduate at Columbia University he became famous—and controversial—as the editor of the campus magazine *Acta Columbiana.* His own writings were mostly humorous and satirical, although in the latter vein he could be bitterly slashing as well as entertaining.

After Columbia he entered a literary career and spent most of his life writing and editing. He worked for several publishers and was in turn published by many different houses, but for the most art he was associated with the firm of Harper and Brothers—forerunner of today's Harper & Rowe. He edited periodicals for Harpers for many years, and Harpers published the bulk of Bangs' books, although a number of other houses, most of them now defunct, handled some of his works. These include the Riggs Publishing Company; Henry T. Coates & Co.; Keppler & Schwarzmann; Ticknor & Company; C. L. Webster; Noyes & Platt; Little Brown; B. W. Dodge; Century; and Doubleday, Page & Co.

Collecting Bangs is both a rewarding and a challenging hobby. About 80 books are credited to him in standard bibliographies, including several written in collaboration. A handful of these are readily obtained on New York's famous "book row" (Fourth Avenue and its adjacent streets, from Fourteenth Street to Cooper Square). Used book stores and specialist dealers in other cities can probably do as well.

Beyond these easily-obtained books *(A Houseboat on the Styx* was JKB's most famous work, and is still around in plentiful supply), the remainder become more and more difficult and expensive to get hold of, leading on to ever more esoteric and costly volumes until one realizes that a really complete Bangs library is virtually impossible to assemble. All else aside, Bangs was the author of many short works that appeared only as broadsides, pamphlets, or pseudonymous or anonymous contributions to different magazines. As a result it is impossible to make a comprehensive list of his works, no less obtain them all.

About half of Bangs' books were fantasies. The remainder can be divided among several other categories. Most numerous were a series of breezy sketches dealing with typical domestic topics of Bangs' day, most of them presented as short stories but a number also in the form of plays. One amusing tale in this group, *Three Weeks in Politics,* is only thinly fictionalized from Bangs' own unsuccessful campaign to become mayor of Yonkers in 1894. Although he ran as a Democrat, he later turned his coat and became a dedicated Republican. A decade after the Yonkers incident he

was a familiar face in high Republican circles, and during the administration of Teddy Roosevelt was a frequent dinner guest at the White House.

One of his last published works was a campaign broadside in support of Warren G. Harding. Bangs himself died on January 21, 1922.

Other odd words by Bangs include a wide variety of subjects. He had several volumes of poetry published, most of it very bad. He wrote a comic biography of Napoleon, *Mr. Bonaparte of Corsica.* With its marvelous illustrations by H. W. McVickar, the book is a total success.

He was bitterly incensed by the repressive Spanish rule in Cuba, late in the nineteenth century, and pilloried the Spanish commander, General Weyler, in a book of humorous character sketches published in 1898. This was *Peeps at People,* previously serialized under the pseudonym Anne Warrington Witherup. By 1902 humor gave way to a surprisingly serious and lengthy book on the Cuban situation, *Uncle Sam Trustee.* Bangs was highly impressed with the performance of the American commander in Cuba, General Leonard Wood, and later tried to promote a presidential campaign in Wood's behalf.

Aside from Bangs' fantasies, the greatest interest in his works for a modern reader probably lies in his satires and pastiches. *Monsieur d'en Brochette,* written in collaboration with B. L. Taylor and Arthur Folwell, is a very funny take-off on swashbucklers of the *Three Musketeers* variety. The title of another Bangs opus, *Adice in Blunderland,* speaks for itself.

Bangs was a great admirer of Arthur Conan Doyle, and that Doyle returned Bangs' high regard is indicated by Doyle's traveling to Yonkers to visit Bangs when he came to America. Bangs' *Houseboat on the Styx* was published in 1895; it deals with the meetings of an association of the ghosts of famous men, both real and fictional, aboard Charon's boat. Mozart is there, Shakespeare, Sir Walter Raleigh, George Washington, Captain Kidd, Noah, and so on. Lady ghosts are barred from this male domain, and their rebellion provides most of the book' s plot.

When Conan Doyle killed off Sherlock Holmes in the famous Reichenbach Falls incident, Bangs seized upon the idea of Sherlock Holmes' ghost as a character, and wrote a sequel to his earlier fantasy, *The Pursuit of the Houseboat,* using Holmes as his hero. Bangs also used Holmes as a character in several short stories,

including tales collected in his books *The Enchanted Typewriter, The Dreamers,* and *Potted Fiction.*

Bangs also enjoyed the Raffles books by Doyle's brother-in-law, E. W. Hornung. These volumes recount the deeds of a man of Holmes-like skill and resourcefulness, narrated by a Watson-like aide named Bunny. But A. J. Raffles, amateur cricket champion and man-about-London, is a professional jewel thief. The Raffles stories were immensely popular in their time, and when Hornung killed off *his* hero, Bangs wrote a book featuring his widow—*Mrs. Raffles,* published 1905.

The following year Harpers' issued one of the most intriguing and sought-after Bangs items: *R. Holmes & Co.* For this book, Bangs seized upon both Sherlock Holmes and A. J. Raffles, brought about the marriage of Holmes and Raffles' daughter, presented them with a son—and then recorded the remarkable adventures of Raffles Holmes, Esq., Detective and Amateur Cracksman by Birth.

A literary discussion in later years, concerning the respective merits of Bangs and of the Scots author and editor Andrew Lang, led some anonymous wag to rhyme:

> For every book I cite by Bangs
> You name a better one of Lang's
> But JKB rewards my toil
> In seeking imitation Doyle.

Although Bangs wrote a great deal of fantasy, it is mostly divided between ghost stories and fairy tales. Works that can be regarded as science fiction are very few, although he did author a musical play that was first produced as *Tommorowland,* then again in a revised version under the title *The Man from Now.*

The story presented here, *A Glance Ahead (Being a Christmas Tale of A.D. 3568),* was one of many of Bangs' works first published in the popular magazines and newspapers of his time. Its first book publication was in *Over the Plum Pudding,* a collection of Bangs' stories issued by Harpers in 1901. Several of the stories are Christmas stories of one sort or another, leading to the conclusion that the book was intended for seasonal promotion.

The reader who found a copy of *Over the Plum Pudding* under his Christmas tree in 1901 was a fortunate person, in for many pleasurable hours of reading. Indeed, the modern reader who finds a copy under his Christmas tree will find himself soon enchanted

by the fancies and humor of this author's works of seventy years ago.

Concerning the story itself, I have refrained from enumerating the many predictions it contains. The ideas of scientific, economic, social and political change that Bangs presents can speak for themselves. We can regret that John Kendrick Bangs did not write much more science fiction than he did, and at the same time be grateful for even this one story, and the enjoyment it still has to offer.

A Glance Ahead

by JOHN KENDRICK BANGS

JUST HOW IT CAME ABOUT, or how he came to get so far ahead, Dawson never knew, but the details are, after all, unimportant. It is what happened, and not how it happened, that concerns us. Suffice it to say that as he waked up that Christmas morning, Dawson became conscious of a great change in himself. He had gone to bed the night before worn in body and weary in spirit. Things had not gone particularly well with him through the year. Business had been unwontedly dull, and his efforts to augument his income by an occasional operation on the Street had brought about precisely the reverse of that for which he had hoped. This morning, however, all seemed right again. His troubles had in some way become mere memories of a remote past. So far from feeling bodily fatigue, which had been a pressingly insistent sensation of his waking moments of late, he experienced a startling sense of absolute freedom from all physical limitation whatsoever. The room in which he slept seemed also to have changed. The pictures on the walls were not only not the same pictures that had been there when he had gone to bed the night before, but appeared, even as he watched them, to change in color and in composition, to represent real action rather than a mere semblance thereof.

"Humph!" he muttered, as a lithograph copy of *The Angelus* before him went through a process of enlivenment wherein the bell actually did ring, the peasants bowing their heads as in duty bound, and then resuming their work again. "I feel like a bird, but I must be a trifle woozy. I never saw pictures behave that way before." Then he tried to stretch himself, and observed, with a feeling of mingled astonishment and alarm, that he had nothing to stretch with. He had no legs, no arms—no body at all. He was about to induldge in an ejaculation of dismay, but there was no time for it, for, even as he began, a terrifying sound, as of rushing horses, over his bed attracted his attention. Investigation showed that this was caused by an engraving of Geroine's *Chariot Race,* which hung on the wall above his pillow—an engraving which held the same peculiar attributes that had astonished him in the marvellous lithograph of *The Angelus* opposite. The thing itself was actually happening up there. The horses and chariots would appear in the perspective rushing madly along the course, and then, reaching the limits of the frame, would disappear, apparently into thin air, amid the shoutings and clamorings of the pictured populace. Three times it looked as if a mass of horseflesh, chariots, charioteers, and dust would be precipitated upon the bed, and if Dawson could have found his head there is no doubt whatever that he would have ducked it.

"I must get out of this," he cried. "But," he added, as his mind reverted to his disembodied condition, "how the deuce can I? What'll I get out with?"

The answer was instant. By the mere exercise of the impulse to be elsewhere the wish was gratified, and Dawson found himself opposite the bureau which stood at the far end of the room.

"Wonder how I look without a body?" he thought, as he ranged his faculties before the glass. But the mirror was of no assistance in the settlement of this problem, for, now that Dawson was mere consciousness only, the mirror gave back no evidence of his material existence.

"This is awful!" he moaned, as he turned and twisted his mind in a mad effort to imagine how he looked. "Where in thunder can I have left myself?"

As he spoke the door opened, and a man having the semblance of a valet entered.

"Good-morning, Mr. Dawson," said the valet—for that is what the intruder was—busying himself about the room. "I hope you find yourself well this morning?"

"I can't find myself at all this morning!" retorted Dawson. "What the devil does this mean? Where's my body?"

"Which one, sir?" the valet inquired, respectfully, pausing in his work.

"Which one?" echoed Dawson. "Wh—which—Oh, Lord! Excuse me, but how many bodies do I happen to have?" he added.

"Five—though a gentleman of your position, sir, ought to have at least ten, if I may make so bold as to speak, sir," said the valet. "Your golf body is pretty well used up, sir, you've played so many holes with it; and I really think you need a new one for evening wear, sir. The one you got from London is rather shabby, don't you think? It can't digest the simplest kind of a dinner, sir."

"The one I got from London, eh?" said Dawson. "I got a body in London, did I? And where's the one I got in Paris?" he demanded, sarcastically.

"You gave that to the coachman, sir," replied the valet. "It never fitted you, and, as you said yourself, it was rather gaudy, sir."

"Oh—I said that, did I? It was one of these loud, assertive, noisy bodies, eh?"

"Yes, sir, extremely so. None of your friends liked you in it, sir," said the valet. "Shall I fetch your lounging body, or will you wish to go to church this morning?" he continued.

"Bring 'em all in' bring every blessed bone of 'em," said Dawson. "I want to see how I look in 'em all; and bring me a morning paper."

"A what, sir?" asked the valet, apparently somewhat perplexed by the order.

"A morning paper, you idiot!" retorted Dawson, growing angry at the question. The man seemed to be so very stupid.

"I don't quite understand what you wish, sir," said the valet, apologetically.

"Oh, you don't, eh?" said Dawson, amazed as well as annoyed at the man's seeming lack of sense. "Well, I want to read the news—"

"Ah! Excuse me, Mr. Dawson," said the valet. "I did not understand. You want the *Daily Ticker.*"

"Oh, do I?" ejaculated Dawson. "Well, if you know what I want better than I do, bring me what you think I want, and add to it a cup of coffee and a roll."

"I beg your pardon!" the valet returned.

"A cup of coffee and a roll!" roared Dawson. "Don't you know what a cup of coffee and a roll is or are? Just ask the cook, will you—"

"Ask the what, sir?" asked the valet, very respectively.

"The cook! the cook! the cook!" screamed Dawson. His patience was exhausted by such manifest dulness.

"I—I'm sincerely anxious to please you, Mr. Dawson," said his man; "but really, sir, you speak so strangely this morning, I hardly know what to do. I—"

"Can't you understand that I'm hungry?" demanded Dawson.

"Oh!" said the valet. "Hungry, of course; yes, you should be at this time in the morning; but—er—your bodies have already been refreshed, sir; I have attended to all that as usual."

"Ah! You've attended to all that, eh? And I've breakfasted, have I?"

"Your bodies have all been fed, sir," said the valet.

"Never mind me, then," said Dawson. "Bring in those well-fed figures of mine, and let me look at 'em. Meanwhile, turn on the—er—*Daily Ticker.*"

The valet bowed, walked across the room, and touched a button on a board which had escaped Dawson's vigilant eye—possibly because his vigilant eye was elsewhere—and, with a sigh of perplexity, left the room. The response to the button pressure was immediate. A clicking as of a stock-ticker began to make itself heard, and from one corner of the bureau a strip of paper tape covered with letters of one kind and another emerged. Dawson watched it unfold for a moment, and then, approaching it, took in the types that were printed upon it. In an instant he understood a portion of the situation at least, although he did not wholly comprehend it. The date was December 25, 3568. He had gone to bed on Christmas Eve, 1898. What had become of the intervening years he knew not—but this was undoubtedly the year of grace 3568, if the ticker was to be believed—and tickers rarely lie, as most stock-speculators know. Instead of living in the nineteenth century, Dawson had in some wise leaped forward into the thirty-sixth.

"Great Scott!" he cried. "Where have I been all this time? I don't wonder my poor old body is gone!"

And then he started to peruse the news. The first item was a statement of governmental intent. It read something like a court circular.

"It is pleasant to announce on Christmas morning," he read, "that the business of the Administration has proven so successful during the year that all loyal citizens, on and after January 1, will be paid $10,000 a month instead of only $7600, as hitherto. The United States Railway Department, under the management of our distinguished Secretary of Railways, Mr. Hankinson Rawley, shows a profit of $750,000,000,000

for the year. Mr. Johneymaker, Secretary of Groceries, estimates the profits of his department at $600,000,000,000, and the Secretary of War announces that the three highly successful series of battles between France and Germany held at the Madison Square Garden have netted the Treasury over $500,000 apiece—no doubt due to the fact that Emperor Bismarck XXXVII, and King Dreyfus XLVIII, led their troops in person. The showing of the Navy Department is quite as good. The good business sense of Secretary Smithers in securing the naval fights between Russia and the Anglo-Indians for American waters is fully established by the results. The twenty encounters between his Indo-Britannic Majesty's Arctic squadron and the Czar's Baltic fleet in Boston Harbor alone have cleared for our citizens $150,000,000 above the guarantees to the two belligerents; whereas the bombardment of St. Petersburg by the Anglo-Indians under our management, thanks to the efficient service of the Cook excursion-steamers direct to the scene of action, has brought us in several hundred millions more. It should be quite evident by this time that the Barnum & Bailey party have shown themselves worthy of the people's confidence."

Dawson forgot all about his possible bodily complications in reading this. Here was the United States gone into business, and instead of levying taxes was actually paying dividends. It was magnificent.

One might have thought the unexpected announcement of the possession of an income of $120,000 a year would be sufficient to destroy any interest in whatever other news the *Ticker* might present; but with Dawson it only served to whet his curiosity, and he read on:

"The acquairement of the department stores by the government in 2433 has proven a decided success. Floorwalker-General Barker announces that the last of the bonds given in payment for the goodwill of these institutions have matured and been paid off. This, too, out of the profits of four centuries. It is true that the laws requiring citizens to patronize these have helped much to bring about this desirable effect, and some credit for the present wholly satisfactory condition of affairs should be given to Senator Barc di Cinchona, of Peru, for having, in 2830, introduced the bill which for the time being covered him with execration. The profits for the coming year, on a conservative estimate, cannot be less than eighteen trillions of dollars—which, as our readers can see, will add much to the prosperity of the nation."

"Worse and worse!" cried Dawson. "Floorwalker-General—compulsory custom—eighteen trillions of dollars!" And then he read again:

"It will be with unexpected pleasure this Christmas morning, too, that

our citizens will read the President's proclamation, in view of the unexampled prosperity of the past year, ordering a bonus of $15,000 gold to be delivered to every family in the land as a Christmas present from the Administration. This will relieve the vaults of the national Treasury of a store of coin that has been somewhat embarrassing to handle. The delivery-wagons will start on their rounds at six o'clock, and it is expected that by midday the money will have been wholly distributed. Residents of large cities are requested not to keep the carriers waiting at the door, since, as will be readily understood, the delivery of so much coin to so many millions of people is not an easy task. It is suggested that barrels of attested capacity be left on the walk, so that the coin may be placed into these without unnecessary delay. Those who still retain the old-fashioned coal-chutes can have the gold dumped into their cellars direct if they will simply have the covers to the coal-holes removed."

Dawson could hardly believe the annoucement. Here was $15,000 coming to him this very morning. It was too good to be true, he thought; but the news was soon confirmed by the valet, who interrupted his reading by bursting breathlessly into the room.

"What on earth are we going to do, Mr. Dawson?" he cried. "The Christmas present has arrived. The cart is outside now."

"Do?" retorted Dawson. "Do? Why, get a shovel and shovel it in. What else?"

"That's easier said than done, sir," said the valet. "The gold-bin is chock-full already. You couldn't get a two-cent piece into the cellar, much less three thousand five-dollar gold pieces. They'd ought to have sent that money in certified checks."

Dawson experienced a sensation of mirth. The idea of quarrelling as to the form of a $15,000 gift struck him as being humorous.

"Isn't there any place but the gold-bin you can put it in?" he demanded. "How about the silver-bin, is that full?"

"I don't know what you mean by the silver-bin," replied the valet. "People don't use silver for money nowadays, sir."

"Oh, they don't, eh? And what do they do with it—pave streets?"

The valet smiled.

"You are having your little joke with me this morning, Mr. Dawson," he said, "or else you have forgotten that all we do with silver now is to make it into bricks and build houses with 'em."

"Well, I'll be hanged!" cried Dawson. "Really?"

"Certainly, sir," observed the valet. "You must remember how silver

gradually cheapened and cheapened until finally it ruined the clay-brick industry?"

"Ah, yes," said Dawson. "I had temporarily forgotten. I do remember the tendency of silver to cheapen, but the ruin of the brick industry has escaped me. This house is—ah—built of silver bricks?"

"Of course it is, Mr. Dawson. As if you didn't know!" said the valet, with a deprecatory smirk.

"Ah—about how much coal—I mean gold—have we in the cellar?" Dawson asked.

"In eagles we have $230,000, sir, but I think there's half a million in fivers. I haven't counted up the $20 pieces for eight weeks, but I think we have a couple of tons left, sir."

"Then, James—Is your name James?"

"Yes, sir—James, or whatever else you please, sir," said the valet, accommodatingly.

"Then, James, if I have all that ready cash in the cellar, you have the $15,000 that has just come. I—ah—I don't think I shall need it today," said Dawson, in a lordly fashion.

"Me, sir?" said James. "Thank you, sir, but really I have no place to put it. I don't know what to do with what I have already on hand."

"Then give it to the poor," said Dawson, desperately.

Again the valet smiled. He evidently thought his master very queer this morning. "There ain't any poor any more, sir."

"No poor?" cried Dawson.

"Of course not," said James. "Really. Mr. Dawson, you seem to have forgotten a great deal. Don't you remember how the forty-seventh amendment to the Constitution abolished poverty?"

"I—ah—I am afraid, James," said Dawson, gasping for breath, "that I've had a stroke of some kind during the night. All these things of which you speak seem—er—seem a little strange to me, James. There seems to be some lesion in my brain somewhere. Tell me about—er—how things are. Am I still in the United Sates?"

"Yes, sir, you are still in the United States."

"And the United States is bounded on the north by—"

"Sir, the United States has no northerly or southerly boundary. The Western Hemisphere is now the United States."

"And Europe?"

"Europe has not changed much since 1900, sir. Don't you remember how in the early years of the twentieth century the whole Eastern Hemisphere became European?"

"I remember that we took part in the division of China," said Dawson.

"Oh yes," said James, "quite so. But in 1920 don't you recall how we swapped off our share in China, together with the Dewey Islands, for Canada and all other British possessions on this side of the earth?"

"Dimly, James, only dimly," said Dawson, astonished, as well he might be, at the news, since he had never even imagined anything of the kind, although the Dewey Islands needed no explanation. "And we have ultimately acquired the whole hemisphere?"

"Yes, sir," replied James. "The South American republics came in naturally in 1940, and the Mexican War in 2363 ended, as it had to, in the conquest of Mexico."

"And, tell me, what are we doing with Patagonia?"

"One of the most flourishing States in the Union, Mr. Dawson. It was made the Immigrant State, sir. All persons immigrating to the United States, by an act of Congress passed in 2480, were compelled to go to Patagonia first, and forced to live there for a period of five years, studying American conditions, after which, provided they could pass examination showing themselves equal to the duties of citizenship, they were permitted to go wherever else in the States they choose."

"And suppose they couldn't pass?" Dawson asked.

"They had to stay in Patagonia until they could," said James. "It is known as the School of Instruction of the States. It is also our penal colony. Instead of prisons, we have a section of Patagonia set apart for the criminal element."

"And the Negro?" asked Dawson. How about him?"

"The Negro, Mr. Dawson, if the histories say rightly, was an awful problem for a great many years. He had so many good points and so many bad that no one knew exactly what to do about him. Finally the sixty-third amendment was passed, ordering his deportation to Africa. It seemed like a hardship at first, but in 2863 he pulled himself together, and today has a continent of his own. Africa is his, and when nations are at war together they hire their troops from Africa. They make splendid soldiers, you know."

"What's become of Kruger and—er—Rhodes?" Dawson asked. "Turned black?"

James laughed. "Oh, Rhodes and Kruger! Why, as I remember it, they smashed each other. But that is ancient history, Mr. Dawson."

"Jove!" cried Dawson. "What changes!" And then an idea crossed his mind. "James," said he, "pack up my luggage. We'll go to London."

"Where?" asked James.

"To the British capital," returned Dawson.

"Very well, sir," said James. "I will buy return tickets for Calcutta at once, sir. Shall we go on the 1.10 or the 3.40? The 1.10 is an express, but the 3.40 has a buffet."

"Which is the quicker?" Dawson asked.

"The 3.40 goes through in thirty-five minutes sir. The 1.10 does it in half an hour."

"Great Scott!" said Dawson. "I think, on the whole, James, I won't try it until tomorrow. Calcutta, eh!" he added to himself. "James," he continued, "when did Calcutta become the British capital?"

"In 2964, sir," said James.

"And London?" queried Dawson.

"I don't know much about those island towns, sir," said James. "It's said that London was once the British capital, but sensible people don't believe it much. Why, it hasn't more than twenty million inhabitants, mostly tailors."

"And how many citizens does a modern city have to have, to amount to anything, James?" asked Dawson, faintly.

"Well," said James scratching his head reflectively, "one hundred and sixty or two hundred millions, according to the last census."

"And New York reaches to where?" Dawson asked, in a tentative manner.

"Oh, not very far. It's only third, you know, in population. The last annexed was Buffalo. The trouble with New York is that it has reached the limits of the State on every' side. We'd make it bigger if we could, but Pennsylvania and Ohio and New Jersey won't give up an inch; and Canada is very jealous of her old boundaries."

"Wisely," said Dawson. And then he chose to be sarcastic. "Why don't they fill in the ocean with ashes and extend the city over the Atlantic, James? In an age of such marvellous growth so much waste space should be utilized," he said.

"Oh, it is," returned the valet. "You, of course, know that all the West Indies are now connected by means of a cinder-track with the mainland?"

"And is the bicyle-path to the Azores built yet?" demanded Dawson, dryly.

"No, Mr. Dawson," replied James. "That was given up in 2947, when the patent balloon tires were invented, by means of which wheelmen can scorch wherever they choose to through space, irrespective of roads."

Dawson gasped. "For Heaven's sake, James," he cried, "I need air!

Bring up the bodies, and let me get aboard one of 'em and take a sleigh-ride in Central Park. I can't stand this much longer."

The valet laughed heartily. "Sleigh-rides have gone out in the Central Park, sir. When Mr. Bunkerton started his earth-heating-and-cooling plant snow was practically abolished hereabouts, Mr. Dawson," said he. "It's never cold enough for snow—always about seventy degrees."

"Ah! The earth is heated from a central station, eh?" asked Dawson.

"Heated and cooled, sir. What with the hot and cold air running through flues from Vesuvius and the north pole into a central reservoir, an absolute mean temperature that never varies from one year's end to another has been obtained. If you wish to take a sleigh-ride you'll have to go to Mars, sir, and just at present the ships running both ways are crowded. They always are during the holiday season. I doubt if you could secure passage for a week."

"Bring up the bodies!" roared Dawson. "I can't express myself in this disembodied state. Mean temperature everywhere; income provided by government; no taxes; no poor; gold dumped into the cellar; houses built of silver; sleigh-riding at Mars. *Bring up the bodies!* Do you hear? The mere idea is wrecking my mind. Give me something physical, and give it to me quick."

Dawson's emotion was so overpowering that the valet was really frightened, and he fled below, whence he shortly reappeared, pushing before him a small wheeling vehicle in which sat three villanous-looking bodies, and a fourth, which Dawson, with a gasp of relief, recognized as his own.

"I thought you said I had five of these things?" he demanded, inspecting the bodies.

"So you have, sir. The one you wear for evening, sir, is being pressed. You fell asleep in it the other night, sir, and got it all wrinkled."

"That golf fellow's a gay-looking prig!" laughed Dawson. "Let me try him on."

The valet stood the body up, and, opening a small door at the top of the skull, ingeniously concealed by the hair, invited Dawson to enter. Without even knowing how it came about, Dawson soon found himself in full possession. Then he walked over to the glass and peered in at himself.

"Humph!" he said. "Not much to look at, am I? Bring me a driver."

James obeyed, and Dawson tried the swing.

"Why, the darned thing's left-handed!" he said, after some awkward work. "I don't like that."

"You picked it out for yourself, sir," replied the valet. "You said a left-handed player always rattled the other man, and, besides, it was the only one you ever had that could keep its eye on the ball."

"Let me out! Let me out!" screamed Dawson. "I don't like it, and I won't have it. I'm suffocating, Open my head and let me out."

The valet unfastened the little door, and Dawson emerged. "What's that tough-looking one for?" he asked, after a pause, during which his brain throbbed with the excitement of his novel experience.

"Prize-fights," said James.

"And the strange-looking thing that appears to have been designed for a fancy-dress ball?"

"Nobody knows what you intended that for, Mr. Dawson. You had it sent up yourself from the bodydasher's last week, sir."

"Well, take it away," roared Dawson. "This may be 3568, but I haven't lost my self-respect entirely. Give it to—ah—give it to the children to play with."

"Really, Mr. Dawson," said the valet, anxiously, "wouldn't I better ring up the President and have him send a doctor here from the Department of Physic? You seem all astray this morning. There aren't any children any more, sir."

"Wha—what? No *children?*" cried Dawson.

"They were abolished three centuries ago, sir," explained the valet.

"Then how the deuce is the world populated?" demanded Dawson.

"It was sufficiently populated at the time the law abolishing children was passed, sir."

"But people die, don't they?"

"Never," replied the valet. "When Dr. Perkinbloom discovered how to separate man's mental from his physical side, by means of this little door in the cranium, all the perishable portions of man were done away with, which is how it is, sir, that, for convenience' sake, after the world was as full of consciousness as it could be comfortably, it was decided not to have any more of it."

"But these bodies, James—these bodies?"

"Oh, they are manufactured—"

"But how?"

"That, sir, is the secret of the inventor," replied the valet, "a secret which he is permitted by our government to retain, although the factories are maintained under the supervision of the Tailor-General."

Dawson was silent. He was absolutely overpowered by the revelation.

"James," he said, after a pause of nearly five minutes, "let me—let me back into my old self just for a moment, please. I—I feel faint, and sort of uncomfortable. I feel lost, don't you know. I can grasp some of your ideas, but—Christmas without children! It does not seem possible."

The valet respectfully raised up the original Dawson, opened the little door in the top of its head, and Dawson slipped in.

"Now lock that door," said Dawson, quickly, once he was safe inside. The valet obeyed nervously.

"Give me the key," said Dawson. "Quick!"

"Yes, sir," said James, handing it over, eyeing his master anxiously meanwhile.

Dawson looked at it. It was a fragile bit of gold, but gold did not appeal to him at the moment, and before the valet could interfere to stop him he had hurled it far out of the window into the busy street below, where it was lost in the maze of traffic.

"There," said Dawson; "I guess you'll have a hard time getting me out of this again. You needn't try. And meanwhile, James, you can kick those other bodies out into the street and dump the gold into the river; after which you may present my compliments to your darned old government, and tell it that it can go where the woodbine twineth. A government that abolishes children can go hang, so far as I am concerned."

James sprang towards Dawson as if he had been stung. His face grew white with wrath. "Sir," he hissed, passionately, "the words that you have spoken are treason, and merit punishment."

"What's that?" cried Dawson, wrathfully.

"Treason is what I said," retorted the valet, aroused. "If I thought you were in your right mind and knew what you were saying, I should conduct you forthwith to the police-station and inform against you to the Secretary of Justice."

"Get out of here, you—you—you impertinent ass!" cried Dawson. "Leave the room! I—I—I discharge you! You forget your position!"

"It is you who forget your position," returned the valet. "Discharge me! I like that. You might just as well try to discharge the President of the United States as me."

Here the valet gave a scornful laugh, and leered maddeningly at Dawson. The latter gazed at him coldly.

"You are my servant?" he demanded.

"By government appointment, at your service," replied James, with a satirical bow. "You have overlooked the fact that the government since 1900 has gradually absorbed all business—every function of labor is now governmental—and a man who arbitrarily bounces a cook, as the ancients used to put it, strikes at the administration. Charges may be preferred against a servant, but he cannot be deprived of his office except upon the report of a committee to the Department of Intelligence. As the President is your servant, so am I."

Dawson sat down aghast, and clutched his forehead with his hands.

"But," he cried, jumping to his feet, "that is intolerable. The logic of the thing makes you, while your party is in power—"

"Your governor," interrupted the valet. "Come," he added, firmly. "You called me an impertinent ass a moment ago, and my patience is exhausted. I shall inform against you. If you aren't sent to Patagonia before night, my name is not James Wilkins."

He laid his hand on Dawson's shoulder roughly. A shock, as of electricity, went through Dawson's person. His old-time strength returned to him, and, turning viciously upon the impudent fellow, he grasped him about his middle with both arms, and, after a struggle that lasted several minutes, dragged him to the window and hurled him, even as he had the key, down into the street below.

This done, he fell unconscious to the floor.

A YEAR HAS PASSED since the episode, and Dawson has become the happiest man in the world, for on his return to consciousness, instead of finding himself in the hands of a revengeful valet, backed by a socialistic government, the past had been restored to him and the future relegated to its proper place. It was only the other night that he spoke of the value of his experience, however.

"It has made me happier, in spite of my many troubles," he said. "If there's anything that can make the present endurable it is the thought of what the future may have in store for us. A guaranteed income, and a detachable spirit, and no taxes, and a variety of imperishable bodies are all very nice, but servants with the manners of custom-house officials, and children abolished! No, thank you. Curious dream, though," he added, "don't you think?"

"No," said I, "not very. It strikes me as a reasonable forecast of what is likely to be if things keep on as they are going. Especially in that matter of our servants."

"Maybe it wasn't a dream," said Dawson. "Maybe, time having neither beginning nor ending, the future is, and I stumbled into it."

"Maybe so," said I. "I think, however, you'll have some difficulty in finding that $15,000 again."

"I don't want to," observed Dawson. "For don't you see I'd find James Wilkins' dead body beside it, and, in spite of its drawbacks, I prefer life in New York to the possibility of Patagonia."

Bound To Be Read

A TORRENT OF FACES
by James Blish & Norman L. Knight

Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, New York; 1967; 270 pp.; $4.95.

Norman L. Knight's first story, *Frontiers of the Unknown,* ran in the July and August 1937 issue of *ASTOUNDING STORIES,* and his second novel, *Crisis in Utopia,* appeared in the July and August issues of *ASTOUNDING SCIENCE FICTION.* James Blish was known as a contributor to the letter departments and as a science fiction fan by the end of 1937, so both authors qualify for consideration here; since it is impossible to review all new science fiction, we confine ourselves to material by authors or fans of the period ending in December 1937.

The present story, say the authors in the preface, is a sort of sequel to the two earlier ones by Knight alone; you will meet the Tritons, which appear in *Crisis in Utopia,* for example. But not the characters who were in either of the earlier tales, though. Blish and Knight started work on the story in 1948, some time before the rash of "overpopulation" stories broke out, and their approach is a most gratifying one. Instead of reacting to the usual panic-button attitude that informs most science fictional speculation on any "clear and present danger" subject, the authors chose the hard way--to me, the true science fiction way. Let's assume that this planet *can* support a population of about one trillion (one thousand billions) by the year 2794, as Henry George wrote. Now--*how?* What sort of society? Does this *have* to be a horror story? If not, then what sort of things which might be unpleasant or uncomfortable from the viewpoint of the person who is getting along very nicely in this part of the twentieth century must be admitted?

The authors selected a utopian society, which we see from the story, is not horrible, although not by any

(turn to page 118)

Space Storm

by HARL VINCENT

The second mate of the freighter, *Hyperion,* hoped to be captain of a spaceship some day—but not of an antiquated tub like this. Then he found himself the senior officer of this very ship, faced with a mutinous crew and crippled in a magnetic storm.

CRIPPLED IN THE GRIP OF A MAGNETIC STORM, one of the least understood and most feared of the hazards of interplanetary travel, the freighter *Hyperion* doggedly made her way Earthward. With her generators and antiquated repulsion drive motors operating at greatly reduced speed in the continuous blasts of the mysterious force field from out of the void, she was already more than twenty hours behind schedule. And now she had sprung a leak topside, making it necessary to seal off the compartment which housed the spare oxygen generators. Since the main air producers were at less than half capacity due to reduced voltage, the air was already heavy with carbon dioxide. The situation was becoming desperate. And still the Old Man—Cullen, long known as the soulless skipper—decreed that they keep on pushing through with everything the old tub had. Cullen was as stubborn as a Martian jasak, sternly unresponsive, refusing even to discuss the matter.

And for no reason at all, thought Tom Gardner, the young second mate. It was an ordinary cargo according to the papers and not a rush consignment at all; if they were a day or so late, what did it matter? Why didn't the Old Man ethertype headquarters in New York for orders

HARL VINCENT was the pen-name of Harl Vincent Schoepflin (1894-1968), whose number of published magazine stories came to one more than his age, when he died (74) last May. He appeared first in the June 1928 issue of *AMAZING STORIES* with *The Golden Girl of Munan;* the first story of his I actually saw was his second, *The Ambassador From Mars,* which was in the September 1928 issue; but that was one I was only able to look through at the newsstands. (That issue was also the one which ran the design now used for FIRST FANDOM on its cover.) The first Vincent story I read, however, was the third he had published, *The War of the Planets* (a sequel to his original appearance) in the January 1929 issue.

His first book-length novel, *Venus Liberated,* was in the Summer 1929 *AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY,* and was presumably accepted by Hugo Gernsback before he lost control of Experimenter Publishing Company. In any event, Harl Vincent appeared frequently in Gernsback's *SCIENCE WONDER STORIES* and *AIR WONDER STORIES,* and sent the sequel to his Venus novel to Dr. Sloane, who ran it in the Fall-Winter 1932 issue of *AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY,* it's title being *Faster Than Light.* His only magazine serial was *Red Twilight,* which ran in *ARGOSY* in 1930, in three parts.

At the time that the present mss. came in, I was actually engaged in rereading *Faster Than Light,* so was able to write Mr. Schoepflin that I not only remember his old stories vaguely from years back, but was enjoying re-reading one. I explained that it might be quite a while before I could actually fit a long short story into *FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION,* but he was delighted at the prospect of its appearing in a magazine of this nature. Sadly, it will have to be a first posthumous tale.

Almost from the time that anyone started to write stories about spaceships, the matter of comparisons between these and ships at sea on Earth came up. Until we actually have spaceships with crews and cargoes sailing between worlds, this will be about the best that can be done. A spaceship is more like a submarine than anything else we've had experience with; and like the submarine, it is sealed off, traveling through a hostile environment. Both the perils of being where it is, and the unchanging dynamics of human behavior, mean that something from within or without–or both–is likely to explode into crisis at any time.

He says in his letter of December 8, 1967: ". . . I had to quit science fiction writing in 1941, when war work in my regular field of engineering became so urgent. And it is only during the past three years that I've gotten back into it a little. After being retired from engineering *twice.*"

The last new material under the name of Harl Vincent that was published while he was still here was a paperback novel, *The Doomsday Planet,* and a novelet, *Invader,* which appeared in *IF,* September 1967.

to put about? There was emergency battery power for the ethertype. And with the storm astern instead of ahead the polarity of the induced currents in the ship would be reversed and they could keep the oxygen apparatus at full capacity. They could idle in the wake of the force field and have a chance to repair the hull leak. These storms usually were of short duration; they might at least have breathing space until it was over. Breathing space literally as well as figuratively, with no danger of suffocation. It was suicide to head into this thing; Cullen must completely mad.

For twelve straight hours Gardner had sat in the topside lookout turret with his eyes glued to the forward radioscope, keeping its cross-hairs on the target star whose drift was a measure of deviations from their course. The emergency buttons beneath his fingers would, he knew, bring but slow response from the vessel should it become necessary to use them. Gardner brooded darkly on the situation. And he had much time to think of the long road which lay ahead of him in the realization of his great ambition — to become master of his own ship.

He would have to serve many years as a second, in the ordinary course of events; then other weary years as mate before he could wear the jagged stripes of a full-fledged skipper. He'd never be skipper of an old tub like the *Hyperion* but of one of the ultra-modern nuclear powered express ships, fully automatic in operation and capable of evading meteor or magnetic storm. But now, if this voyage turned out as it boded, he'd never attain his coveted goal.

At the last mess he'd heard the men muttering. Of course the men always seemed to be muttering about something, but this time it was more than the usual grumpy dissatisfaction; it bordered on mutiny. Turga, the Martian Chief Engineer, was backing them in their protests, too. And he had gone as a committee of one to talk with Hobbs, the mate, who it was thought might have some influence with Cullen.

"And if the old Man won't listen to reason," Turga had said ominously, "we take things in our own hands."

That a ship's officer should be on the side of the men in a thing like this was unprecedented. And yet Gardner could not help but see that it was nothing but the skipper's stubborness which had brought it on. He couldn't countenance it though, of course; not only was it a flagrant violation of spacemen's tradition but Turga's action could prove a serious blow to discipline aboard. The Martian was a big man, powerful and dangerous, with the Martian's characteristic disregard of the lives

of others. For these reasons, if for none other, Gardner would be forced to back up Cullen at any cost.

"Ready to relieve you, Mister Gardner," a gruff voice broke in on his reflections. He turned to look at Jorgenson, one of the regular lookouts. The man's eyes were on the deck.

"All right, Jorg," the second said wearily. "What else is new?"

The man took the lookout seat without once looking directly at his superior. "Hobbs didn't get anywhere with the Old Man," he clipped off. "The men are pretty sore."

Gardner's eyes narrowed. "Trouble, you think?"

"Mebbe so," the man muttered from the radioscope eyepiece.

"Well, you just sit tight, Jorg. I'll see what I can do."

"Aye, Sir." There was no conviction in the spaceman's tone.

Gardner started below slowly. As he came down to the control deck, he saw Turga and two crewmen just leaving the ethertype cabin. The three scuttled down the corridor skirting the engine room pit and were gone. This was strange; no crew member, no officers save the captain or mates were privileged to enter that cabin. Gardner reached the door in a few strides and flung it open.

Stark, the young ethertype man, sat at his instrument table with his head in his folded arms. A picture of dejection.

"Stark!" exclaimed Garnder. "What's wrong?"

The lad raised a fear-blanched face and Gardner saw that he had a cut over one eye and that the other was swelling rapidly into the makings of a shiner. "What happened to you, Lad?"

"Turga; he made me send a message."

"Made you what?"

"An ethertype for help. They'd have killed me if I hadn't done it. This is mutiny, Mister Gardner."

"Let's see the message."

"Here it is—and the reply." Stark handed over two tapes.

"M—mm. Called for help from the *Sirius* and she's coming. Why those rats! They can't do this—the salvage'll be terrific; it'll just about break the Line. Stark, you get a message right off to the *Sirius* countermanding the first one. Tell them we don't need them."

Stark hesitated, looking at the door.

"Get it out!" boomed Gardner. "I'll take care of them."

The keys clicked and the tape ran through the transmitter but the second mate remained until the *Sirius* answered. "Now destroy those tapes," Gardner ordered. "And you don't know a thing about them if

Turga asks. Let them think help is on the way; the cowards—wanting to abandon ship way out here."

Stark nodded, his face brightening somewhat. "Trust me, Sir," he said. "I know you'll fix things with the Old Man."

"Thanks. Hope I can."

And then came a violent shuddering of the vessel. The old tramp freighter seemed to shiver from stem to stern as if about to shake herself apart. There was a further slowing down of engines and pumps, more dimming of the lights. Then a jarring explosion out in the main well.

"Stick to your post, Lad." Gardner was half through the door.

"Aye, Sir."

THE MAIN WELL WAS A SCENE of utter confusion. Gardner ran out along the gallery that swung over the engine room well pit and looked down. The storm had intensified in a terrific gust of supermagnetic energy, paralyzing every motor in the ship. Frantic, disorganized, the crew was manning the air pumps by hand. The pungent reek of burned insulation filled the well. Smoke drifted down from above.

Oddly, Cullen wasn't roaring orders from the control bridge. The silence, excepting for the babblings of the crew below, was uncanny to say the least. Gardner raised incredulous eyes to the bridge and what he saw there sent him up the companionway two steps at a time.

The main controls were a mass of fuming wreckage; a short circuit, or some vagary of the space storm, had blasted them into unrecognizable masses of twisted metal and smouldering insulating material. Two corpses were there, charred almost beyond recognition. The reek of burned flesh mingled with the stench of the still boiling phenol-resins. Cullen and Hobbs were the victims; both captain and mate!

Gardner, unexpectedly, was in command of the *Hyperion.* But, what would be the final outcome? Already there was the rush of heavy footsteps up the stair. Turga, followed by a half dozen of the crew, was on his way to the bridge. Calmly, Gardner opened the cabinet of the emergency controls and set the automatic pilot to take over the present course as soon as power was again available. He wheeled to face Turga.

Before the Martian could spout words from his rage-contorted mouth, Gardner roared: "Your place is below, Mister Turga. Mine is here. You get down there and get those motors back in service, you hear?"

"Below, hell! *I'm* taking over this ship."

"You know the laws of the spaceways!" Gardner's voice was like a whiplash. "Cullen and Hobbs are dead; I'm in command until I land the

Hyperion at Port of Terra. And you heard my orders. Thomas — and you, Kibbey — come up here on the bridge. You, Turga, below."

The big Martian bellowed like an enraged canal drachja. His huge fists doubled, his face reddened and he lunged upward. Gardner flipped one of his Corey guns from its holster. "Back!" he shouted. "All of you but Thomas and Kibbey. Back to your posts. The first man who disobeys an order burns; you all know space law."

"Why, you young bastard! You'll pay for this," Turga yelped. But he stopped in his tracks.

"To your posts," the new skipper repeated.

There was an icy edge to his voice, a glitter in his pale eyes that meant business to the men, hard-bitten though most of them were. The two he'd asked for, Thomas and Kibbey, came slowly up the steps, the others as slowly filtered downward. All excepting Turga; he stood swaying indecisively, muttering invectives.

Gardner waved the Corey gun. "You heard me, Mister Turga," he said midly. "I mean it." The gun waved anew, then leveled at Turga's chest.

"All right, wise guy," the Martian flung back, turning to go down. "All right, but I'll get you later."

Grinning mirthlessly, the new master of the *Hyperion* holstered his gun and turned to the waiting spacemen. "Get those two corpses out through the airlock first," he ordered, "and then report back here to me for further instructions."

"Aye, Sir." Both men were respectful enough but in surly manner. Gardner didn't try to deceive himself; trouble had only just begun. He turned to the door of the captain's quarters.

Sounds of clanking hand pumps came from below, then the thump of a lone starter and the hesitant rising whine of a partly crippled motor. Gardner studied the charts on Cullen's plotting table. Now was his chance to put about and get the *Hyperion* in shape for safely continuing the voyage. He wondered momentarily why he hadn't set the auto-pilot to start the cutback at once. Something had stopped him.

Gardner wasn't superstitious but there were things talked about by spacemen in the long watches that gave one the creeps. And, right now, the newly-acquired role of skipper was giving him something akin to those very creeps. He hadn't had to wait long to become master of a ship, such a ship as the *Hyperion* was; but if he made a mistake now his career as a skipper would be at an end.

The charts were a blur before his tired eyes. His mind was a chaos of conflicting emotions. He appreciated fully the responsiblity which

had been thrust upon him so suddenly, appreciated the potentialities in the mutinous situation which existed below. There was dynamite down there in the lower regions; an explosion could occur at any time. Turga wouldn't remain peaceful—that was for sure—and the men already were on the way to complete insubordination. Gardner would have to think and plan, but quick.

He closed the door and rang Stark on the vidphone. The lad's face flicked into view, still white and now more distorted from the beating he'd received. In a few words Gardner told him what had happened. Then: "Of course I'm master now, Stark, and I expect your full support. And I want you to do this: First ethertype for a space patrol vessel and tell them to stand off our stern as soon as they reach us. Then I want you to invent a good story for the men, in case they come to question you about the *Sirius*. Tell them she was out of commission herself and couldn't make it, that you got some other ship—any old ship you can think of—and that this one is on its way but has farther to come. Fake typed messages, you know. Get it?"

The lad grinned despite his swollen face. "Sure I get it. I'll have it the, let me see—the *Calliope*—that's it. The *Calliope* is on her way from twelve million miles away."

"The *Calliope?* Never heard of her."

"Neither did I." Stark grinned, and was off the disc.

IT WASN'T LONG BEFORE Thomas and Kibbey returned from their grisly task. They reported meekly enough to Gardner and he assigned them at once to their new duties. "Temporarily," he said, "you two are officers of the *Hyperion*. Whether these emergency promotions will stand up when we've landed remains to be seen. A lot depends on yourselves, a lot on the success of our voyage. You, Thomas, are now acting first mate. And you, Kibbey, second. You've both had experience at the controls. Thomas will take first watch, Kibbey second—from now on. And for the present all you need do is keep us on our course at whatever speed we can maintain--headed for Terra, of course. Any change in these orders I'll advise you of. That's all; if you need me I'll be inside."

The two men gazed with hanging jaws, incredulity written large in their expressions. Their "Aye, Sirs" were mere whispers.

Gardner closed the door of the captain's quarters on them and was forced to a bitter grin. *That'll give them something to think about. And Turga, too. Wonder if they'll stick.*

He soon found himself nodding over the charts. His mind refused to function normally. He was torn between his former idea of turning back to get out of the storm and that something which was telling to go ahead as they were. And there was the overpowering desire for sleep; he hadn't slept in thirty hours, had hardly eaten. And something had to be done about it. Without removing his clothes, he stretched out on the divan in the chart room and was instantly in the land of dreams.

But the dreams were disturbing and soon awakened him. He had not slept more than an hour. A glance at the instruments showed him that the voltage had picked up somewhat, also that the ship was accelerating again though just barely. The magnetic intensity outside had slightly abated but the *Hyperion* was still in its grip. Negligible headway had been gained against the hull leak, though the air pressure and quality in the ship was not down to the danger point. The course had not been altered. Evidently the potential mutineers were biding their time; Gardner had no delusions regarding the ultimate falling of the blow.

His thoughts dwelt persistently on the deceased Cullen, he couldn't explain why. For what reason had the man so stubbornly insisted on keeping to his course regardless of the battering of the storm? There must have been something besides sheer perversity and the desire to drive the men like slaves. There must have been . . .

He went to Cullen's desk, started going through his papers. Pigeonholes and drawers were crammed with scrawled notes, sheets of calculations in the Old Man's shaky hand, private bills, all sorts of advertising matter for interplanetary cruises, everything but the papers which should be there relating to the *Hyperion's* voyage and cargo. The something Gardner couldn't account for urged him on to a desperately thorough search.

The regular ship's papers were in a secret compartment he came upon by accident. All in perfect order and quite in line with what Cullen had posted. But there was another paper, a letter from New York headquarters marked "Personal." It was an agreement between Cullen and the President of the line that a bonus of ten thousand interplanetary credits was to be paid upon landing of the cargo at Port of Terra no later than noon of the twenty-seventh. Three and a half days from now, and the *Hyperion* almost a full day behind schedule! So that was why the Old Man had been driving officers and men so mercilessly, why he had insisted upon going on regardless of danger. And he hadn't intended to divide this bonus as was required by space law. There were other letters of similar nature relative to previous voyages, and never once had there been a bonus

split. Cullen had been holding out, cheating his men, amassing a private fortune at their expense.

Gardner sat for a long time tapping the desk top with his fingertips. Thinking, planning. This was a good thing to have up his sleeve in case of future eventualities. The shrill of the vidphone out short his meditations. It was young Stark.

"Turga was just here," he reported. "I was in my bunk and he woke me up. Asked me when the *Sirius* would be here and I showed him the fake ethertypes."

"What'd he say?"

"Growled a lot about how long it would take the *Calliope* to get to us and hinted broadly that he'd be in command before then. Is—is everything all right, Mister—er, Captain?"

"So far, Stark. Don't worry about it. And get your sleep. The call signal will waken you as always if there are any incoming messages."

"Aye, Sir." The sleepy-eyed, damaged face vanished from the disc.

Then there came a banging on the captain's door; the trouble was here already. "Who's there?" Gardner shouted at the steel panel.

"Turga. Open up before I burn down the door with this dis-ray. And come unarmed."

Gardner unstrapped his holsters. It was now or never; he'd have to establish his authority right now and without question. And he'd have to do it without spilling blood. Without replying to the Martian, he unlocked the door and flung it open, shoving aside the crystal snout of the menacing dis-ray.

"Put that down!" he snapped.

Mouth open, Turga obeyed. He towered over the slender, wiry new skipper. His face worked convulsively. Behind him on the gallery grating were perhaps a dozen of the crew.

"Well?" demanded Gardner coolly. But he was far from cool inside. In a movement so fast the watchers couldn't follow it, he ducked under the huge arms of the Martian, side-stepped and got in the first blow, a jab to the copper-colored jaw that sent the engineer's head wabbling on his thick neck. The watching men were silent. They held aloof, a tradition of the spaceways having it that when two men fight hand-to-hand no others interfere, regardless of their interest in the quarrel.

Turga recovered swiftly and ducked Gardner's second punch. Then, bellowing, he rushed in head down, knotty-muscled arms spread wide. If ever those arms closed in around him, Gardner's ribs could be cracked like pipe clay. The Martian knew little about the science of boxing but

was an almost invincible wrestler, and he could take punishment. Gardner's punches were long and hard; they cracked against the big man's ribs, against his jaw and mouth with jolting force. Blood spurted from the Martian's lips, from over his eye. He doubled up again and again with the pain of midsection jabs that were lightning fast and of terrific power. Gardner miraculously slipped out of an arm hold that would have wrenched that member loose from his body. And then Turga had him where he wanted him, with arms pinioned at his sides and a bear hug encircling him.

Everything went black before Gardner's eyes as the man squeezed. The Martian's knee came up to the groin and the young officer felt his senses reeling. He was drifting into unconsciousness, aflame with such agony of body as he'd never believed a man could endure. He tried to kick and couldn't; he bent every effort of his failing muscles and flagging will futilely to break that terrible hold. Turga's hot breath was in his eyes; the man's laugh rang loud and triumphantly. Gardner drew back his head.

Through that bloody mist which almost obscured his vision he saw that leering, monstrous face before him, above him. A sudden accession of vigor surged through him and he jerked his head violently forward and upward, crashing his skull full against the Martian's jaw. To him a new galaxy of stars sprang into sudden being. His skull felt as if he'd split it against a stone. But the crushing arms relaxed from his body, the Martian sagged limply.

Gardner was free and away; Turga quickly recovering. But this time, superhuman strength seemed to flow into the Earthman. He brought up a left that started almost from the gallery grating and ended at the precise spot where it would do the most harm. *Crack!* The sound was like that of an ancient pistol shot. Turga's head snapped back and he tottered like a lightning-stricken oak, then crashed down the first flight of iron steps to the landing, where he lay twisted and oddly limp. The big Martian was down and out. Gardner, sore and lame, stood glaring at the ring of awed faces.

"Anyone else want to try it?" he demanded belligerently.

There was no acceptance of his offer.

"All right, Thomas. You and Kibbey get him in irons—in the brig. And you, Carlos, back there, you're assistant Chief, or were—now you take over from Turga. You're Chief now. And get the machinery up to speed as fast as the storm will permit. The rest of you back to your posts. On the double now!"

Without protest, in twos and threes, the erstwhile mutineers scuttled

off in their several directions. After that, Gardner shut himself in the captain's quarters and, calmly and methodically, got himself to bed, where he slept the remainder of the watch.

THE VIDPHONE SHRILLED just as the ship's bell woke him. Gardner faced young Stark in the disc. "Patrol ship's here," the lad told him excitedly. "Off our stern about a hundred miles. M246 is her number and she's asking what's the trouble."

"Tell them mutiny threatened but is under control and ask them to stand by in case there's another flareup. She's not visible in the view tanks, is she?"

"Not without a radioscope magnifier, Captain. The men won't know."

"We hope. All right, Stark. Feeling better?" Gardner saw that the lad's face had been doctored up some.

"Feel better than I look, Captain," chuckled Stark. "But the cook told me Turga looks even worse than I do. So that's something."

"Glad you take it so well, Stark. Let me know anything that comes in, won't you?"

"Aye, Sir." The disc went blank.

"Great kid," Gardner muttered as he dressed. "If only all of them were like that."

A quick glance at the instruments showed him that the voltage was still better than it had been last watch and that the acceleration was increasing slowly. A check of the log showed they had lost but little more than hour since the last accounting; but this would never do if that bonus were to be earned.

Gardner looked off into nothingness for a moment and in that moment resolved that the *Hyperion* would be set down in Port of Terra on time, that the bonus wouldn't be forfeit. By some means or other, he would do this, mutiny or no mutiny; and he would subject the old ship to no salvage charges.

An idea was beginning to take shape in his mind. Gardner had been a lab man before shipping in the spacelanes; he knew something of the new developments in energy release; he knew the antiquated machinery of the *Hyperion* inside and out; he'd studied the mechanisms of the most modern of the fleet vessels which had left her and her kind antedated relics. Stopping for a moment to exchange a few words with Thomas, who was on duty at the bridge controls and apparently tractable enough, he clumped down to the workshop. The *Hyperion* was now holding her own against the storm but had made up none of the lost time.

In the workshop he took swift account of the stock. Here was a thing the *Hyperion* did boast, a fairly well equipped shop and a goodly supply of materials. The Old Man had fussed around here from time to time, and it was rumored that he had a few rather important inventions to his credit. At any rate there were here in considerable quantity a number of chemicals and basic elements not ordinarily to be found in the workshop of a tramp freighter. Gardner examined a dis-ray projector, set it up on a test bench and made sure its condensers were charged to the full. These hand tools were designed to emit extremely powerful neutron streams whose bombarding energy was ample for most fusing and cutting operations required in repair work. They could be adapted to other uses, Gardner reflected.

His eyes gleamed with inspiration when he found several kilograms of carefully shielded extra nuclear fuel for the dis-ray projectors. His idea was expanding rapidly now; he *would* land the *Hyperion* on schedule—ahead of schedule. But he needed a few men he could trust, needed some real help. In his mind he began to consider the possibilities in that direction. Stark, of course, was to be relied upon, but was little more than a boy and inexperienced. Thomas and Kibbey—perhaps; at least they were worth trying. And in the engine room, Carlos—maybe. Action must be swift and sure.

Out in the gallery of the ship's main well once more, Gardner saw at once that something had gone amiss. Men, above and below, were gathering here and there in little knots, heads together—off duty. Up on the ethertype gallery a few of them were near Stark's door. Higher up, on the top gallery, there seemed to be considerable commotion. The air was fetid and heavy, difficult to breathe at all—but charged with impending peril.

"All hands at their posts!" the new skipper bellowed. His voice echoed and re-echoed in the pit but few of the men stirred; none replied.

It seemed that some organizing was taking place up there on the top gallery. Gardner sped upward, shoving aside any who attempted to block his progress.

"What goes on here?" he yelped, when he saw Jorgenson in the center of the tough group on the top gallery.

"I'll tell you," mouthed the lookout man, "I've sighted the *Calliope* off our stern. We've decided to abandon ship as soon as she pulls alongside. Stark's to ethertype her to take us off. The *Hyperion* can go to hell in the black abyss as far as we're concerned."

Gardner held himself in by a mighty effort. "Who's heading this new mutiny?" he asked levelly.

"We'll take Turga any time. A couple of the boys are freeing him now. And if you want to keep on living you'd better lay low, Gardner."

"Thomas!" the new skipper yelled across the pit. "In my quarters. Corey guns in the cabinet; break the glass—you and Kibbey get them. Then hold Turga below."

By the commotion on the control bridge, he saw those two at least could be trusted. They were carrying out his orders. Here on the upper gallery the assembled crew members were closing in on him.

"One side, men!" Jorgenson rasped. "I'll shut him up—for keeps."

The lookout, Gardner saw, had a dis-ray projector. Where he'd obtained it, no one could know. These deadly releasers of energy were always locked in the workshop; no arms or dangerous tools of any sort were permitted in the possession of any save officers and those only in emergency. The crew fell away precipitately before the crystal snout of the swaying weapon in Jorgenson's hands.

Gardner's move to his shoulder holsters was so swift it couldn't be followed. His Corey guns spat blue flame almost before they had leaped into sight. Jorgenson screamed as the dis-ray fused down in his hands to drip in white-hot, sizzling blobs of molten metal. His flesh blackened as it smoked, the hands and forearms shriveling like roasts of meat. He waved the members frantically and hopelessly in the effort to cool down the consuming heat.

"Back, all of you!" Gardner commanded. "Or there'll be more of the same. And, get to your posts. For the last time—move!"

One by one, heads lowered, the men backed down before the blazing wrath of this amazing youngster who had taken the Old Man's place. But they still muttered of the *Calliope,* of abandoning ship. Gardner made a quick dive for the ethertype gallery.

Men there were breaking down the door to Stark's cubby. The Corey guns in Gardner's hands weaved in arcs that took them all in. "Get to your posts," he hissed. "And stay there until further orders. You punks think this is a picnic or something? Jump!"

Cursing and muttering, the men slunk off. " "Open up, Stark," the young skipper called through the door.

A frightened, battered face appeared in the cautiously opened crack. Gardner slipped inside. "Anything from M246?" he asked the lad.

"Nothing. Want to raise them, Captain? Want me to tell them what's going on?"

"No. I'll take care of this." He strode to the vidphone, got Carlos on the disc. "Thomas and Kibbey down there yet?" he asked of the obviously worried Spaniard.

"Aye, Capitan. They have the Turga locked in again. It is good so. But bad, senor Capitan. Bad. What is it we do now?"

"Just sit tight and wait for the siren, Carlos. Good boy." The disc flicked blank. Here was another who could be counted on.

Swiftly, Gardner told young Stark what was in the wind. Slowly, the lad's expression changed. His customary grin had returned by the time the new skipper was out of the gallery.

In another minute the siren shrieked, calling all hands to the pit.

Gardner was waiting, Corey guns in full view. He called Thomas, Kibbey and Carlos to his side. Stark joined them with the utmost alacrity.

"Men," said Gardner when, sullen and still muttering, they were assembled in the pit, "this mutiny is over. Right now, finally over. You have been fooled in more ways than one. First off, that's not the *Calliope* off our stern; there'll be no abandoning ship, no reneging. If Jorgenson had used a higher magnification in the radioscope he'd have seen the number M246 on that ship behind us. She's a patrol scout; how does that strike you?"

The babel of shouted invectives and the milling around of the men which greeted this was quickly stopped by the weaving Corey guns of the three new officers. Black looks changed to cowed expressions.

"That's where *I* fooled you," Gardner continued. "And for your own good, you idiots. But someone else fooled you before this and *not* for your good but to your harm. Not only once but a dozen times. Look at these." He waved a sheaf of papers. "Know what these are? And what's been done to you? These are private agreements of the Old Man's. This top one provides a bonus of ten thousand credits for the bringing to port on time of the *Hyperion* this trip. The others are similar agreements for previous trips. Did any of you get a bonus split from Cullen—ever?"

Amazed silence greeted this, then such a wave of shouted denials and angry curses as would have been really alarming a few minutes before. But now the men were switching around; Gardner knew he had them in hand.

"That's why Cullen drove you, made slaves of you. That's why he insisted on pushing through this storm. Not for you—for himself. Things will be different now; you'll push of your own accord because you'll get your share of this bonus. Will we land in Port on Terra on time?"

A howl of agreement arose. Then, as the full import of the thing struck home it quieted down to solemn silence. A spaceman spoke up.

"But we're almost a day behind," he objected. "This old tub's no good. Got no speed or guts. And the storm's not over."

"Right; I expected to hear that," replied Gardner. "But I know a way we can get the old tub there on time. We'll change course and proceed around the storm. That will lose time but then we'll push the *Hyperion* faster than she ever went before. But you'll have to work and work hard. Double shift till we land. I'll work with you. Do you now trust me to do it—for all of us?"

"Yes! Aye! Bravo! Aljur!" Quick approval in many tongues.

"Good, men; I'm proud of you now. So back to your posts and do your damnedest. And don't be surprised at what happens in a very short time; we're going places now."

No order of any skipper of a spaceship had ever been obeyed with greater enthusiasm and alacrity.

"Can we do it, Captain?" Stark asked eagerly.

"We can. Back to your ethertype, Lad, and tell the M246 we won't need her after all. Then just stand by and hold to your seat. Thomas and Kibbey'll help me put this across."

Stark grinned happily as he clattered up the companionway.

GARDNER HADN'T ERRED IN HIS CHOICE of first and second officers. Thomas and Kibbey were indefatiguable in the work that followed. And they were capable, well-trained men. Though amazed by the revelation of their new skipper's plan, they carried out its details without questioning his unheard-of method.

The super-jets of the *Hyperion,* ordinarily used only in blast-off and landing, were their only hope; using normal propulsion, they couldn't begin to make up the lost time even if the storm loosed its grip immediately. The old repulsion motors were far too low-powered and too badly in need of overhaul. With the super-jets they could change course and get away from the storm and accelerate to a much higher speed as well. But there was only enough of the regular jet fuel for a safe landing at Port of Terra; if they used it all in space there would be none left to prevent a crash of annihilation.

"We'll produce the extra fuel," Gardner explained to the astonished men. "Not only that, we'll make the *Hyperion* temporarily an atomic-powered ship. She'll be able to show her heels to any tramp freighter in the heavens."

He followed his words with action. Apparatus and material was taken from the workshop to the stern jets. Things Thomas and Kibbey didn't understand the use of at first but didn't question at all. This Gardner had them stumped. But soon it all became clear and understandable.

They set up a full fueled dis-ray projector alongside each of the two stern jets. And a feeding magazine for handling the nuclear fuel it contained. The high temperature alloy construction of the jets was good for no more than five thousand degrees Fahrenheit. But that would be enough; it would only be necessary to keep the temperature down below the melting point of the material by introducing a dilutant with the nuclear fuel. From a separate magazine Gardner contrived for each jet.

It was all figured out. The dis-ray was to serve only as a source of nuclear fuel supply and as fast as the fuel content of one was used up another would be clamped in its place. They had plenty of them available and plenty of extra fuel to recharge them. Talk about beating swords into plowshares!

Then everything was in readiness; the three officers returned to the bridge controls. The *Hyperion* lurched forward to the tremendous power of the now nuclear-powered jets. In an unbelievably short time they had left the storm far astern. Generators and motors returned to normal spee; the lights glowed to full brilliance. The men worked as they'd never worked before, all except Turga who remained in the brig, and Jorgenson who was in sick bay. The air freshened rapidly.

THREE DAYS LATER, the *Hyperion* drifted down over Port of Terra. In the ethertype cubby, Gardner stoodwith young Stark as they read off the tape a message which told of the waiting bonus and which congratulated the new skipper on his accomplishment. There would be a new berth for him as master of one of the latest type nuclear-powered vessels the line had just acquired. The *Hyperion* would be sold. Gardner was content.

And the crew was content as well, he knew. Altogether, it had been a most successful solution of a bad situation. And, the captain reflected, all's well that ends well.

His pleasant thoughts were broken into by a boyish chuckle of glee from young Stark. The chuckle grew merrily into uncontrollable laughter.

"Look, Captain," the lad chortled, pointing to the view tank before them. "Look at the name of that dinky little port lookout ship."

(Turn to page 90)

EDITORIAL

The Borders of "Science Fiction"

by ROBERT A. W. LOWNDES

You will find exaggerations in this essay, and they are deliberate. I shall be extrapolating in places to and beyond the point of absurdity. And I'd be willing to make a small bet that readers will disagree as to just when and where this happens. To a certain degree, that is what science fiction has always been about.

A definition may be true or partly true, false or partly false, but above all other considerations it should be useful. The "x is what I mean when I point to it" approach has its uses, but isn't helpful if the object is not on hand at the moment to point to; for all its limitations and inadequacies, we need a definition which can communicate the idea we have in mind to a reasonable degree when there is no tangible object to point to at the moment.

Dictionaries can be helpful. They have serious limitations, as both students of general semantics, and the more limited plain semantics have to learn. First of all, to say, "*the* dictionary says . . ." is by no means as definitive as many people who use this expression imagine; *which* dictionary? There are quite a number of dictionaries, and at any particular moment, we're likely to find that not only does "Webster" differ from "Funk and Wagnalls", to name just two with which I have a little familiarity, but there are differences between editions of these two. Second, almost any dictionary omits more characteristics of an object, etc., than it describes; and at any time, some of these omissions can be crucial. As S.I. Hayakawa noted, in no dictionary description of a house is the possibility of termites mentioned. Third, even the best dictionary can only provide you with the most general way in which a given word or term was used *at the time the copy was supplied to the editor of the particular edition.* And even allowing for last-moment changes, what you see there in your dictionary

may or may not relate to the word's general meaning or usage now; and it may have no relation to the specific way that you or I use the word or term.

Back in the days when some of the readers of *WEIRD TALES* violently objected to Farnsworth Wright's use of "weird-scientific" stories, as he called them, and one reader expressed the fear that WT would become another of "those crazy go-to-the-moon magazines", the term "science fiction"–or "scientifiction", as many of us called it–had no standing whatsoever. And I doubt if it ever occurred to me in 1933 that, 30 years later, one could pick up a copy of *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary,* and find on page 771: "science fiction *n:* fiction dealing principally with the impact of actual or imagined science upon society or individuals; *broadly:* literary fantasy including a scientific factor as an essential orienting component".

This dictionary is based on Webster's Third New International Dictionary, which has status, however some of us may dislike it. In one of Red Stout's "Nero Wolfe" series, the story opens with Wolfe burning a copy of that volume, page by page in the fireplace, noting to Archie Goodwin that, among other crimes, it sanctions making the words "infer" and "imply" interchangeable. This is, of course, an accurate report of how those words actually are used–but I share Wolfe's distaste for legitimizing ignorance, and blurring communication.

In order to communicate, it's sometimes no less important to know what a word or term does *not* mean as what it does. Some *inferences* are valid, while others are not; you infer something from what I say or write: the question is, did I actually *imply* what you inferred? Using the terms interchangeably not only debases the currency of language, but makes some sort of exchanges extremely difficult if not entirely impossible.

There's no such thing as 100% insurance against the misuse of language; no matter how "science fiction" is defined in any dictionary, both magazines and books are going to appear with contents labelled "science fiction"; and a reading will prove the label to have been misleading, if not fraudulent. However, most publishers will foreswear the misleading or dishonest label once they're convinced that "science fiction" means "thus-and-thus" but *not* "so-and-so". While a broad definition may be desirable, even such an one stops somewhere; one crosses the border and is in a different territory. So long as science fiction was a term in limbo, fans and followers were in a position to say what could and what could not be considered examples of it. This is no longer the case. The definition has been taken out of our hands.

And while I have a certain amount of interest in seeing words and terms employed correctly, and a certain amount of interest in seeing what I consider to be worthwhile standards in science fiction upheld, my main interest is a practical one. I don't want to be defrauded by a false label. So the question I'm raising here is: What are the borders of the term "science fiction" as defined in the quotation above?

At first glance, the definition looks simple and straight-forward–but look again! Neither the word "science" nor " scientific" is qualified: therefore, *any* definition we find under the word "science" (it's on the same page, directly preceding "science fiction") may be used.

Lovely, isn't it? There's five headings under which the word "science" is defined, and under the first we find (a) "possession of knowledge as distinguished from ignorance or misunderstanding" (b) "knowledge attained through study or practice". Then, second, comes "a department of systematized knowledge as an object of study (the science of theology)". Also included here is "something (as a sport or technique) that may be studied or learned like systematiz ed knowledge."

Thus, we have here an authoritative definition of "science" which allows astrologers, palm readers, hex doctors, scientological auditors, theologians, etc., all to call themselves scientists and their disciplines science. Therefore, there is no reason why stories depending upon any of these disciplines and/or discoveries or extrapolations, speculations, etc., derived from them cannot or should not be labelled "science fiction".

It is not until we get to the third heading that we find the sort of definition which possibly most science fictionists would consider the exclusive one: "knowledge covering general laws, esp. as obtained and tested through scientific method; *specif.* NATURAL SCIENCE."

The dream of many of us who were despised and rejected in the 30s, and our favorite stories ignored, has come true: we have become respectable; our beloved reading matter is recognized and enshrined in dictionaries. And now we are paying the price for "respectability". In a recent issue of *ANALOG,* P. Schuyler Miller remarks about getting the bad taste out of one's mouth after reading Velikovsky. Well, taste is a matter of individual preference, but the fact is that Velikovsky has just as much a right to be considered a scientist, and his works scientific, so far as science fiction is concerned, as have his critics. We all have our individual points of squeamishness; Mr. Miller has shown one of his, and I'll probably indicate some of mine in this essay.

The price of respectability is high. You or I may *prefer* some other definition than either the one in the 1963 Webster's Collegiate, or one which appears in any other edition, or other dictionary, but preference is as far as we can go. The odds are heavy that the persons in a position to make the effective decisions as to what should or should not be labelled "science fiction", and offered for sale as such, will care very little about your preferences and mine. The dictionary definitions allow them to call almost anything "science fiction"; and this I do not like at all.

What I would like, despite my interest in and enjoyment of some of the subjects which now may be the subjects of "science fiction", would be to have some sort of word or phrase which everyone could understand as meaning *only* science in relation to the prescriptions of what physicists call the "scientific method"; let the rest be labelled "fantasy"--perhaps dividing that into "science-directed fantasy" and "magic-directed fantasy", etc. But we do not have any such officially recognized terms, and my Webster is no more helpful: "principles and procedures for the systematic pursuit of knowledge involving the recognition and formulation of a problem, the collecting of data through observation and experiment, and the formulation and testing

of hypotheses." Astrology and at least some systems of theology have not been excluded.

According to Webster's definitions, then, all three members of James Blish's trilogy, *Doctor Mirabilis, Black Easter* (or *Faust Aleph Null),* and *A Case of Conscience,* are science fiction. The first deals with the impact of "actual or imagined" science upon an individual of the thirteenth century--the Franciscan, Roger Bacon, whom Blish considers as the founding father of the scientific method; the second deals with black magic, which at the very least can be considered an imagined science, and the third is definitely in the area which most science fictionists consider science, even though theology plays a crucial role. Again, Blish's *There Shall Be No Darkness,* which you will find reprinted in the January 1969 *MAGAZINE OF HORROR,* can certainly stand as science fiction, offering as it does a non-supernatural explanation for the phenomenon known as lycanthropy.

I would prefer to exclude the supernatural from any definition of science fiction, *providing* that we consider as "supernatural" phenomena deriving from the proposition that there is a being or there are beings or forces, etc., which have the power to suspend or violate natural laws--the Laws of the Universe. This does not exclude God or all theology or all religion, as there are *some* systems of teachings about the Deity which assert that the Divinity never suspends or violates the Laws of the Universe; and while what various people have called "miracles", etc., actually happened--and happen--they occurred nonetheless through the operations of natural law or laws of which we are yet ignorant. (Of course, the proposition that our wonderful and clever twentieth century scientists do not know *all* the fundamental laws of the Universe is very disconcerting to some people.)

I am speaking, when I mention excluding from the definition of science fiction, of *effective* exclusion--reasonably guaranteeing that that which is excluded will not be labelled "'science fiction"; or if it is, then there may be some recourse to charges of misrepresentation, etc.

For broad as the definition of science fiction may be (we are stuck with dictionary definitions, whether we like them or not), there are still borders to the area; it still might be possible to show that certain stories are *not* science fiction. It becomes difficult at the borders themselves, just as it is difficult to decide whether certain microscopic entities are plants or animals--but there is no difficulty in deciding where to place an apple tree or an elephant. From the very first, time travel tales have been considered borderline science fiction, and now we seldom encounter an author who in any way tries to justify a time machine. Back in the 50s, Theodore Sturgeon once said that it was hard to distinguish hyperspace from witchcraft--but science fictionists preferred to make the distinction. But now there is at least the suspicion that the means in getting to what we call hyperspace lies through what we call witchcraft--and an entirely non-supernatural area of phenomena at that. H.P. Lovecraft pointed the way in *The Dreams in the Witch House,* and "Doc" E.E. Smith went the way in *Skylark DuQuesne;* there have been others, of course, many appearing

in the pages of *ASTOUNDING SCIENCE FICTION,* later *ANALOG,* under the direction of John W. Campbell, *Hereticus Magister.*

C.S. Lewis's trilogy, *Out of the Silent Planet, Perelandra,* and *That Hideous Strength* are within the borders, even rooted as they are in a theology of supernaturalism; they have sufficient material science elements above the surface to qualify; even if some of the "science" is erroneous. Tolkien's *Lords of the Ring* trilogy, on the other hand, is beyond the border, as is *The Worm Ouroboros* (and I assume the other Eddison novels). J.G. Ballard's *The Crystal World* is beyond the border, not science fiction. No matter whether you consider it a moving and excellent story, as many people do, or a crashing bore, as I do; there is no scientific factor as an essential orienting component. It deals with bizarre phenomena, for which an explanation is given in scientific-sounding double-talk--and, to be fair, a little more interesting than most such double-talk; but if this were eliminated, the story would not be changed in the slightest. It makes just as much or as little sense without it as with it.

And here I suggest a possible yardstick for judging borderline cases, as well as others. How essential to the story is the science or scientific element, regardless of category? This is not necessarily to ask what percentage of the word count deals with science, actual or imagined, but rather what would be left were the "science" to be deleted? If, as with many stories labelled science fiction, the difference is barely distinguishable, then the exhibit before us is *not* science fiction.

Mark Twain's *Connecticut Yankee* comes out as science fiction, despite the time travel element, since it is nearly all about the impact of various aspects of nineteenth century science on an imaginary period in the early Christian era. Amputate that, and there's no coherent story left. *Glory Road* is *not* science fiction, you might say; Heinlein prefers to speak of some of the furniture of heroic fantasy in scientific terms, but were these to be changed to the more traditional fantasy terms we'd still have the same story; neither motivation nor action depends upon the "science" here. Sorry to disappoint you, but according to Webster, *Glory Road* is indeed science fiction: and both motivation and action are dependent on an imagined systematic body of knowledge, which is as rigorous as any branch of science considered respectable in the here and now. *Bring the Jubilee,* by Ward Moore, is a much more difficult case to judge. Motivation and action eventually hang upon the imaginary science of time traveling, and, of course if you eliminate the return to Gettysburg 1863, just before the battle, you will have a different story. Yet, this is essentially a sociological fantasy with a very clever ending which, however, does not seem inevitably to be dictated by the material. I think I'll hedge on this and say that the story as it stands is just barely science fiction, but it didn't have to be.

A sizeable fraction, at least, of the material appearing in science fiction magazines, and material labelled "science fiction", appearing outside the specialized magazines, is not science fiction. While it is only recently that I have begun to read stories that are purportedly examples of the "new wave" or "speculative fiction", I have managed to read a fair number and variety of them within the last year. Most of them are not science fiction, and it isn't

so much a case of it being possible to excise the science without changing the story in any essential way as there being no science to delete in the first place.

Just why these stories should be called "speculative" fiction is a little beyond me, but I suppose that this term is as good as anything else. Speculative fiction hasn't been any sort of new invention, though, at least since the 18th century; and if you want to read an example which is both speculative and experimental, and in its way "scientific", too (dealing with bodies of knowledge), you might try de Sade's *100 Days of Sodom.* It requires a strong stomach, is for adults only, and you may not care to read it through; but I doubt that anyone who has read a substantial amount of de Sade is going to be impressed by much of the new wave boys' and girls' attempts to be shocking.

And I doubt that anyone who really *knows* Tolstoy's and Dostoyevsky's novels (so far as this is possible for a reader, like myself and most of the rest of us who have to depend upon translations) is going to be impressed by most of the new wavist attempts to be significant. I italicized that word "knows" because there's a wide difference between having read an author and knowing his work. Nor do I list these two authors in any exclusive sense; however, a fair percentage of the speculative fiction that I have read adds up to earnest ignorance–doubtlessly sincere young writers doing badly what the two authors mentioned above did well.

There are exceptions, of course; any method, device, etc., which enables an author to produce a good story is obviously a good method or device–for that author, at that time. And when you've read a really fine story, you *might* be interested in the "story behind the story"–but not before. But it seems to me that a writer who cares about his work is not going to be a faddist, although I must confess that seeing bad experiments published in the past used to impel me to see if I could do the same thing well. Eventually, I learned to ponder the question of whether it was worth doing at all.

Perhaps it is. And there's only one reason why the proportion of poor speculative fiction written should be larger than the proportion of poor science fiction written: a general decay of standards of excellence; if science fiction were coming in as a "new wave" now, it might be much worse than it is. I'm for correct categorizing, but this does not in any way guarantee the quality of individual items within the category.

The salt may or may not have lost its savor, but we still do not want to get it mixed up with the sugar; nor will the sugar replace it, in any event. While, to me, speculative fiction is a cage, and a compulsively conformist cage at that, fine work can be done within its confines, as Harlan Ellison has proven single-handed. (I don't consider Samuel R. Delany a speculative fiction author at all. He has written very fine science fiction.)

In all forms of fiction, as in other arts, it's necessary to tolerate large percentages of poor to bad material in order to have the excellent; and here, above some other areas, the highest cannot stand without the lowest. Toleration, however, does not mean pretending that something around you does not exist, nor does it mean mislabelling; that is why the interested reader should be informed that most of the new wave material (however excellent in other respects) lies outside the borders of "science fiction". RAWL

Death From The Stars

by A. ROWLEY HILLIARD

"What is this 'life' you hope to find? How will you perceive it?. . . I suppose you will use Assimilation as a yardstick—a criterion by which to judge. You will look for *something* that increases itself at the expense of other things."

GEORGE DIXON WAS STRUGGLING wildly amidst a great conflagration. Fire burned his body; blazed before his eyes, roared in his ears. For hours and hours he struggled, wondering why he was not consumed . . .

And then he awakened, to the recognition of his own bedroom and the fact that he had been dreaming. But that burning feeling of his body did not cease. Neither did the bright flashes of light before his eyes, the roaring in his ears; and these phenomena were ten times stranger now than in a dream. His limbs twitched convulsively under the bedclothes.

A. ROWLEY HILLIARD first came to science fictionists' attention when the March 1931 issue of *WONDER STORIES* appeared, around the first of February, bearing a blue-background cover by Frank R. Paul for the new author's short story, *The Green Torture.* Longer stories followed, but it was this short one in the October 1931 issue that made the greatest impact; for this was the first time this theme had appeared in science fiction magazines. It would be done by others, later, in different ways; but the power of Hilliard's pioneering treatment has not diminished.

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(*Illustrated by Marchioni*)

Must be sick, he thought. Nerves a bit frazzled lately. Overwork, perhaps; but he hated to admit that. Couldn't give up work now. No, not now. He rolled over, and groaned. Rotten feeling! Feel better in the

morning, most likely. Had to. Had to watch his little block. He was worried about it. It had been getting smaller right along, and sort of crumbling. Yes, instead of growing it was shrinking away; and he couldn't understand that—couldn't see where it disappeared . . .

For an hour he tossed uneasily on the bed. Although his bodily discomfort was steadily growing, it was not that which occupied his mind. He was worrying about his little block, down in the laboratory. If he could make sure it was all right, he might get some sleep. He threw back the covers, swung his feet to the floor, and stood up. Uttering a low, startled cry he swayed dizzily, and leaned against the wall for support.

"Something pretty darned wrong!" he said aloud. His voice sounded strange and high-pitched, in his own ears. He found the light switch.

The journey down the stairs was long and terrible. He held fast to the banisters, taking one step at a time. Ordinary muscular coordination seemed to have deserted him. Each movement required an effort of will. He could not last long. Having gained the foot of the stairs, he staggered to the laboratory door on the right; burst in, and switched on the light. There was a long moment of complete silence. Then he gave a hoarse cry.

The laboratory was a large, square room, with long windows on two sides. Against the walls were set lead-topped tables, littered with tubes, retorts, and various electrical devices. But it was towards the center of the room that George Dixon stared, wide-eyed.

There, on a small table, under a bell-jar reposed a little heap of black dust. Nothing more. There was certainly nothing in the exhibit to astonish an ordinary observer.

Yet George Dixon was both astonished and terrified. For he knew that, only yesterday, there had been, under that jar, a pretty fair sized block, composed of his "life force". And now it was gone. Where?

Things had to go somewhere, he told himself. The jar was sealed tightly to the glass plate beneath. Yet there remained only black dust—and George knew what that was.

He laid his hand on the glass. Warm, but not hot. His eyes wandered around the room—then became fixed upon a grotesque object on the window ledge. It was—or, rather, had been—his geranium plant; but now the leaves were a dead black. As he watched, one of them dropped off, and crumbled to powder on the floor.

George drew his hand across his eyes. Something was happening—something he could not understand. He must try to think. But it was

hard to think. His mind didn't seem to work right—kept wandering. He wished Julius were there. Julius would help him.

He stared at the geranium plant. Even the stalk was black. It was crumbling away—as his little block had crumbled. But that didn't make it any easier. No, he couldn't think. If only Julius . . .

He remembered the things Julius had said when they had last talked together. Julius had come to visit him—an unusual occurrence—saying that he was interested in a proposed experiment George had mentioned in a letter. George had explained cautiously his intentions to explore for life in substances deposited on Earth from outside.

"What is life?" Julius had asked abruptly. George remembered laughing. Julius had a way of asking unanswerable questions. George had muttered something about Assimilation.

"Life is a disease,"—Julius had a way of asking unanswerable questions—and then answering them.

"Disease!" George had exclaimed.

"Exactly. A disease or corruption which afflicts the stagnant matter which is Earth. This planet's matter is very low in energy. It is cooling—disintegrating. And you and I are the crawling, writhing maggots of its decay."

"Horrible and preposterous!"

"Horrible, perhaps—but not preposterous. We say that life cannot exist upon the sun. Why? Because the sun is too hot for it. What does that mean? Merely that the sun has the protective energy to purge or sterilize itself of such 'life' as we represent. Place a needle point in the flame—as the doctor uses daily; there you have the same sort of sterilization, on a small scale."

George had been slightly indignant. "You put a disagreeable interpretation on a few small facts. That may amuse you, Julius; but I fail to see how such speculations can have any practical value . . ."

"They might serve as a warning to such as you."

"Warning?"

"Yes. If I understand your motives correctly, you want to explore life in meteoric substances. Since they consist of matter in a very low state of energy—and because mere cold is not always fatal to life, even as we know it, I fully believe that you will find what you are looking for."

"That is gratifying. It makes you practically unique among scientists!"

Julius had not appeared amused. "But I am far from believing that you are wise in attempting it. When you find it—what then?"

"What then?—I don't understand you."

"Well—do you expect it to be identical with some form of life we experience on Earth?"

"Not necessarily."

"Probably?"

"No. I should say that the probability points in the other direction. Life is a product of its environment; and it would be a remarkable coincidence if this supposed new life had developed under conditions identical with those on Earth.

"It is my theory that some such 'life' may exist in meteoric substances, in a state of suspended animation—induced perhaps by lack of heat and most certainly by lack of food. To put it briefly, I intend to test for its presence and a variety of temperatures and a variety of foods . . . "

George remembered that Julius had nodded absently. There had been a strange look in his heavy eyes as he asked quietly: "And are you not afraid?"

George shuddered, now, as he lay back in his chair. He felt dizzy and sick. His body was numb, with that helpless, prickly numbness one sometimes feels locally when his foot is "asleep". Yes, he was afraid now—but then he had merely said: "Afraid?—afraid of what?"

"Good Lord, man, don't you see it? You have just admitted that you expect this new life to be different from anything on Earth . . . "

"But I don't see why a mere difference—"

"Wait! Let us go a little more deeply into this life—as-a-disease idea. Not only is life as a whole a disease of matter, but each species of life is a disease to every other. The tubercular bacillus on the wall of your lung has no more personal animosity towards you than you had towards the duck you ate for dinner. It is merely living off its environment, as you are. Obviously, mankind is as truly a disease of ducks as tuberculosis is of mankind . . . "

"I see what you are driving at. You mean that any new life I might discover would automatically be hostile to many or all terrestrial species. Yet I see nothing terrifying in that. Man has certainly dealt with any number of hostile species during his existence, and has—"

"Man has dealt with nothing!" Julius cut in angrily. "Man has *been* dealt with. You talk as if he had arrived at his present form by an act of will, and fine determination. That is contrary to the first principles of evolutionary science. Man is a form of life that has been shaped by its enemies. Yet even after millions of years and of adaptation, he is not immune to attack—attack by species which are a part of the very

environment in which he has developed . . . And you propose to introduce something *new*. Good God!"

When angry, Julius was somewhat overbearing. George had asked meekly, "Well then, would you advise me to give up the idea?"

"No, no, no! Am I your master? Do I do your thinking for you? Damn it, man—make up your own mind! I want to be sure you know what you're about—that's all . . . "

There had never been any doubt in George's mind about what he was going to do. He made that clear.

"All right! Do you have your meteorite?"

"No. It is astonishingly difficult to get hold of one. So far I have had no luck at all."

Julius drew a folded newspaper from his pocket; and held it out, indicating with his finger a paragraph:—

STRANGE THEFT IN MUSEUM

> An unidentified man visited the American Museum of Natural History late yesterday afternoon, and departed with one small meteorite, the property of that establishment. He was seen by a guard, rapidly leaving the building, after having stood for some time over a case containing a number of similar exhibits. Dr. Hardman, Curator, when questioned, could suggest no motive for such a theft.

George looked up curiously from the paper. Julius was leaning back, negligently tossing from one hand to the other a small black stone. "Catch!" he said.

Clumsily George caught it. "Why, you can't—I can't—It isn't right!" he stammered.

"That is my affair!" snapped Julius. "The moral stigma attached to you by the transaction—that of receiving stolen goods, I suppose—is very small and very theoretical . . . "

"But—"

"But, nothing! That little thing is going to be put to a real use, instead of being eternally gaped at by a succession of idiots who don't give a damn what it is or where it came from . . . Now I'm going."

"But wait a minute, Julius! What do you really think about this experiment? what is your honest opinion?"

"I think it is a very promising line of enquiry and a very laudable task. Praiseworthy, but uncertain.

"What is this 'life' you hope to find? How will you perceive it? Have you stopped to think that there may be life that we cannot observe through the senses developed on Earth—that does not obey the rules we have set up?

"I suppose you will use Assimilation as a yardstick—a criterion by which to judge. You will look for *something* that increases itself at the expense of other things. A ticklish job, at the best; because that something may be intangible, immeasurable, and altogether strange to you. In other words, you are looking for a new disease—one that you will not understand when you find it . . . What will it attack? What will it feed on? . . . Who knows?"

Julius had gone, then. An unsociable man, his visits were very rare and very short.

George wished Julius were there now. He needed someone else to think for him. The little block—the food—was gone. *Was* there something there—*something* that increased itself at the expense of other things? Had he succeeded? Was there life? . . . The food was gone. But there was the "something that increased itself?"

Under the glass—it must be. Everything had been sealed tight . . .

IN THE POT ON THE WINDOW-LEDGE was only a stalk. All the rest was black dust. He stared at it dully . . . Suddenly a glimpse of something on the arm of his chair made him start violently. It moved towards him—a dead gray thing, splotched with black. He stared at it unbelievingly . . .

It was his hand!

George Dixon struggled to his feet; and stood trembling, in a wild panic. What was happening? He stared at his hands . . . Diseased! The word brought a new terror. Julius's words rang in his brain:—"Life is a disease . . . *Something* that increases itself at the expense of other things!" He stared pleadingly at the glass jar. *It* was under the glass. It couldn't get out . . .

"—Life that we cannot observe through the senses developed on Earth—that does not obey the rules we have set up . . . " —Some voice was repeating the words in his brain— "—That *does not obey the rules . . .*"

A horrible possibility flashed into his mind; and, with a sob, he blundered out of the room, desperately slamming the door. He needed help—he needed Julius. The telephone . . .

* * * * * *

Julius Humboldt was cursing softly as he grasped the receiver, but when he laid it down his expression was very serious. The confused babble on the wire would have been meaningless to anyone else, but it galvanized him into action. Hurriedly, he set about dressing; moving quickly about the tiny room.

Five minutes later, a shabby figure, he tip-toed down a very shabby staircase; and emerged on Tenth Avenue. Turning east, he half walked, half ran along Forty-ninth Street towards Broadway.

Julius Humboldt was shabby because he was poor, and because he did not care anyway. He was taciturn—perhaps a misanthrope, although more inclined to disregard his fellow men than to hate them.

He had once been a professor of chemistry at Columbia University, but constant clashes with the authorities—having mainly to do with his "radical and unfounded theories"—had necessitated his resignation. He now lived precariously on a small annuity—seldom doing any work of a type calculated to increase his meagre resources. He had few acquaintances and only one friend—young George Dixon.

At Broadway, he plunged down the steps into the subway; and boarded a downtown train. Arriving at the Pennsylvania Station, he learned that the next Port Washington train left at four. Muttering to himself he studied a time-table. Great Neck—four-forty . . . He paced up and down the platform . . .

"The block is gone—gone! It's got me . . . " —and then something about a geranium. George had certainly sounded strange—wild. There must be something really wrong.

The block—he knew what the block was. George had written him a letter, outlining his method of procedure. He had broken up the meteorite—pounded and pulverized it into a fine powder. This powder he had mixed with a combination of foodstuffs—animal and vegetable. The whole combination he had then compressed, under great pressure, into a small, square block—which he had then subjected to various temperatures and various frequencies of ultra-violet rays.

A simple, almost childlike performance, Julius reflected. Yet direct and reasonable—characteristic of George. If this gave no results, he would try some other way. But, wait . . .

George had said the block was gone. Gone? Julius stood still, biting his lips. Stolen?—Ridiculous! The thing had no value . . .

The gates clattered open; and, absent-mindedly, he boarded the train. Expensive, these Long Island trains, he thought ruefully. For fellows like George who didn't have to worry about money, it didn't matter.

"—It's got me . . . " —What could he have meant by that? His hands thrust deep in his coat pockets, his chin on his chest, Julius Humboldt pondered the matter, as the train rumbled under the East River and out into Long Island.

As the journey advanced, he began to feel more agitated. Several times he shook his head violently; and once gave a startled exclamation, causing the few other passengers in the car to turn amused eyes in his Many frowned slightly at sight of the gaunt, forbidding figure with the face that was, by now, very, very grim.

The Great Neck station was deserted, and he set out at a quick pace to cover the half mile to George Dixon's house. The sky was overcast, and no signs of dawn were yet visible. The damp air enveloped him like a black mist, depressing his spirits and seeming to increase the sense of heavy foreboding which he suffered. The large house, set back among trees, was an ominous jet shadow, as he approached it up a winding path. Obsessed with a strange uneasiness, he walked on tiptoe, straining his eyes and ears.

In another instant he was frozen into immobility by a laugh—a sudden, high-pitched, gurgling laugh, it rose and fell and ended in a sob.

He gazed fixedly at the house. That was not George. Who—what—was there? Slowly he advanced, mounted the steps, and laid his hand on the doorknob. From inside the house there came a thrill cry, a crash—then silence.

The door was unlocked. For a long time he stood very still, his head thrust forward. Then he slipped quietly into the black interior. He remembered vaguely the plan of the place. To the left was the laboratory; to the right a sitting room; and straight ahead the stairway, flanked by a narrow hall leading to the back of the house. He moved to the left, and felt along the wall to the laboratory door. A faint line of light showed beneath it. He knocked, and waited but there was no sound. Cautiously, he pashed open the door.

The room was untenanted. Light came from a large globe in the ceiling. He advanced across the floor, his eyes darting to right and left. He paused over the table in the center, and gazed thoughtfully down at the small heap of metallic dust under the jar.

"Pretty well cleaned out," he muttered. "It's gone, all right!" Again he glanced around. This time his eye was caught by the unusual appearance of the flower-pot on the window ledge. It appeared to be filled with something black. He walked over and dug into the surface with his finger.

Underneath was dry earth. It was just a thin layer of powder on top. He pursed his lips.

A sound behind made him wheel around, and gaze into the hall-way. Slowly there took shape in the darkness there a crouching, mottled figure. It was a man—half naked—whose skin was a dead grey in color—splotched with black. It was staring at him with wide, fixed eyes; and creeping forward with a convulsive motion of the lower legs. All the hope went out of him, as he recognized George Dixon. He cursed.

"George!—In God's name, what's the matter?"

Julius Humboldt had taken three quick steps forward when the other leaped. He had a flashing glimpse of wide eyes, flaring nostrils, bared teeth—and ducked instinctively. The flying body struck him a glancing blow on the shoulder, and crashed full-length on the floor. He stared at it, horrified.

"George.

The prostrate creature screamed, and beat the floor with its fists. Humboldt recoiled instinctively.

"Mad!" he breathed through the white lips. He advanced gingerly; and, kneeling down, placed a hand gently on the other's shoulder. There came a quick, sharp snarl; and he snatched his hand violently from between the other's closing teeth.

Again he leaped back, and stood rigidly still. Hurried thoughts raced through his brain. He would have to do something for George—and do it quick. A doctor . . . ?

He frowned irritably. What would a doctor do? He didn't want some fool messing around and making things worse. What would a doctor treat for? What was wrong with George?—that was the question.

He had better assume it was the experiment that was doing it. He had been only half serious when he had warned George about it; but now . . . Obviously the experiment had been a success. George had found something—something that had consumed the food under that jar. Might as well call it "life" as anything else; although it must be totally different from terrestrial life. Something in the form of a ray—light ray, *gamma* ray—something that could pass through glass. Yes, he was pretty sure of that. But then what would it do?

He stood rigidly still, gazing with unseeing eyes down at the now quiet figure on the floor. He must marshal all the facts. He must understand this thing in order to conquer it . . .

George had babbled something about a geranium. Now, what . . . Suddenly he remembered the flower pot, and his eyes widened. At last

the thing became clear to him. He felt that he could visualize graphically what had happened—what was happening. Rays shooting out—radiating—in all directions from the jar; passing through the plant on the window ledge—and consuming it; passing through George . . .

He shuddered. The brain, the nerves—the most delicate organs—would go first, naturally. He must do something—get a doctor; a sedative might help. He left the room, and locked the door behind him. Making for the telephone stand, he tripped over something. It was the telephone. It was loose—the wires torn out of the box.

Well, there was an extension in George's bedroom. He took the stairs three at a time. There was alight in the room. He had just picked up the phone when something peculiar caught his eye. The bed sheet was a strange, dark gray in color. He bent closer. Yes—something wrong. He touched it, and started violently. The sheet crumbled to powder under his hand. He shook his head in bewilderment . . .

Obviously the sheet was affected in the same way as George and the geranium. But why the sheet? Why not something nearer the laboratory? . . . Then he gasped, as the full meaning of the phenomenon burst upon him. It was *George* that had infected the sheet. George was being fed on by the strange disease; therefore, George was giving off the rays—and in enormously greater quantities than the little block had done.

The horror of the situation overcame him, and he sat down heavily upon the bed. George broadcasting Death! He tried to look ahead—to understand the full significance of that fact.

George broadcasting Death—impregnating anything and everything that came near him. And then infected things radiating it, in their turn . . .

Where would it stop? What could stop it? He shrugged his shoulders helplessly. You couldn't fight a thing you knew nothing about . . . The thing would spread like wild-fire. George was a menace to mankind—to all life—to the world!

Absent-mindedly he picked up the telephone; shrugged again; and set it down . . . Couldn't call a doctor. Couldn't call anybody. Nobody would understand. They would take George to a hospital where he would spread disaster at a terrific rate, or they would hang around and infect themselves; then go out and spread the thing. Warnings would be no use; people never paid any attention to warnings they could not understand. They would laugh at him; he could hear them . . .

"Life from the stars, indeed! . . . Disease from afar—ha, ha!" They would call him mad—and then fall victims to the thing they derided. And the minute a few were affected nothing could stop it. He, himself,

knew more about it than anyone else; but he had no idea how it could be checked . . .

He wondered vaguely if he were infected. Perhaps not, in so short a time . . . Well, he would be before he got through.

He would have to work alone . . . Work?—he drew his hand across his eyes—Work? . . . On what? Grimly he considered. He couldn't leave George, certainly. Must try to save him, no matter how small the chances; must study the Rays—try to find out . . .

From below came a thud and a heavy pounding on the laboratory door. He shivered slightly.

What to do with George? Would have to keep him quiet. Frowning heavily, he descended the stairs. The racket in the laboratory was steadily increasing in volume. To the pounding was now added shrill, angry cries.

A hypodermic of some sort would be necessary for such noises would soon bring inquisitive people—and inquisitive people meant disaster. But how to get dope without a doctor? He knew of a doctor in the city who minded his own business; but deals like that required money, and he had no money . . . Well, he had to do something right away. You could hear that howling a block.

He unlocked the door. As he turned the knob, the door burst open, knocking him violently backwards. Before he could regain his balance the other was upon him. As he was borne to the floor, all other emotions were dominated by his amazement at the homicidal tendencies of this man who, a week ago, had been as mild-mannered and studious as one could wish.

He fought vainly against the powerful, frenzied grip on his throat. Blood pounded in his ears; his temples throbbed. With his one free hand he reached along the floor for something that he knew was there. He found it,—the telephone—and, swinging it up, relentlessly clubbed the head of his assailant. The grip on his throat relaxed, and the body of George Dixon rolled over limply on the floor. Getting to his feet he raised it in his arms; and slowly mounted the stairs. He laid it on the bed and bent over it. Out for three or four hours, he decided with relief. He needed at least that.

He searched methodically through the clothes in the closet, but found only a little over six dollars. A further search of the bureau netted only the check-book of a local bank. He stared at this latter find long and thoroughly; then shook his head. No, he would try searching the rest of the house first. An hour's search, however, brought no results; and

at seven o'clock he was seated at a desk with the check-book and one of George's letters before him.

Promptly at nine he was at the local bank. The young teller looked thoughtfully at the check he presented.

"Are you staying with Mr. Dixon, Mr.—Mr. . . . ?"

"Humboldt. Yes, I am."

"Well—it's a rather large—"

"If it is identification you want, I have a letter from Mr. Dixon to myself," said Humboldt brusquely.

The young man studied the proffered letter gravely. "All right sir. You know we have to be careful, sir. How will you have it? . . .

Humboldt caught the nine-fifteen train to the city. He sat huddled in the corner of a car, feeling very tired and a little sick. He felt that he was on a fool's errand. George, he knew, could not be saved; it was only a question of how long he would live. Not very long, probably. A thing that can attack vital nerves kills quickly . . .

Humboldt stirred uneasily in his seat. George's death, he reflected grimly, would not end the matter. Far from it! . . . There was enough substance in his body to feed the disease for weeks—months, perhaps, And throughout all that time the deadly radiations would continue—menacing all life, passing through all barriers . . .

All barriers?—He remained deep in thought during the rest of the journey. By the time the Pennsylvania Station was reached, he had come to a decision.

An hour later—richer by a few grams of morphine and a syringe; poorer by a considerable sum of money—he was studying a classified telephone directory. Finding what he wanted, he called a number, and gave an order. There appeared to be some difficulty at the other end; and he spoke irritably.

"Yes—*lead.* Can you hear me? . . . Good!—Do you have one, or not? . . . Good! I want immediate delivery . . . What? . . . I don't care what it costs . . . Yes—this afternoon . . . Good! . . . Get a truck. I will pay all delivery charges . . . "

He gave the address, and hung up. The journey back to Great Neck he spent in deep thought. How to study the Rays? How to make them tangible—measurable?—An electroscope? Photographic plates?

He groaned in despair. All that was so arduous—so complicated; and he had need for speed. The Rays were spreading rapidly, he was certain; eating into the timbers of the house, into the grounds, perhaps . . .

To his immense relief the house was quiet when he let himself in at

the front door. He mounted the stairs on tip-toe, and cautiously unlocked the bedroom door. Caution left him, then; and for a moment he was overcome by nausea. Forcing himself, he approached, wide-eyed, the black lump on the bed. The head was bald, and the one ear that he could see was no more than a stump. The nose was a black wound in the ghastly face. The eyes were gone.

Fighting his disgust, he reached out a hand. The body felt like warm mud. He shuddered, and drew back. . No need for the hypo now—but he was glad he had got the other thing . . .

His eye was caught by three ugly indentations in the skull. *His* work . . .

Horror surged up within him, and he dashed headlong from the room and down the stairs. He sank weakly into a chair in the living room. He was trembling; felt very tired—incapable of thought. He knew he had better get out of the house. Death was there. He imagined the Rays driving through the air about him. He felt that he could almost see them. They would be coming from many sources now--shooting in all directions . . .

His head fell back upon the cushion of the chair. He knew he must get up, but he needed a little rest. His strength was exhausted . . . Suddenly his eyes became intent. He had been gazing at the ceiling, but had not until now noticed the dark, irregular stain in its center.

He wondered about it. It alarmed him, somehow . . .

What would cause such a stain? What was above this room? Feebly he concentrated on the problem. The stairs . . . the hall—to the right was—yes, George's bedroom! The Thing was lying there—yes, in the center right above the stain . . .

He shivered. He would have to get out; but he needed a little rest. He relaxed . . .

The stain had a peculiar shape. He decided that it had legs—a head—and one arm. He watched it steadily. It seemed to move a little . . .

Yes, it was moving! In sudden alarm, he struggled to rise; but could not. The one arm of the shape was stretching out towards him. He knew how it would feel—like warm mud . . . His terror was a physical pain, but he could not move.

Suddenly it was all around him—the warm mud. He was sinking in it, and could not breathe. Death was near, but help was coming. He could hear it—a small bell, very faint. Then a booming sound. He renewed his struggles—and suddenly was free . . .

Julius Humboldt opened his eyes, and leaped to his feet. Angrily he had been asleep. Now there was somebody at the front door—ringing,

knocking. He would have to go, but it was a damned nuisance! He stepped into the hall. Certainly didn't want visitors. But maybe it was . . .

He started slightly as he swung open the door, and saw the policeman. He remained silent, collecting his wits . . .

"Mr. Dixon home?" rumbled the officer.

Julius Humboldt put out his hand, and grasped the door-post. He stood perfectly still, frowning. Then: "No. He is not at home," he said.

"No?"—the officer's tone was peculiar—"Well, maybe you know something about this.—Is your name Humboldt?"

"Yes,"—Humboldt stared fixedly at the slip of paper. The officer shook it impatiently . . .

"Where'd you get this check?" he asked loudly.

"From Mr. Dixon."

"Yes?—Well, I wanna hear Dixon say that . . . " He took a step forward. Humboldt did not move.

"Mr. Dixon is not at home," he repeated.

The officer growled. "Oh!—So you're gonna get hard, huh? You better be nice—get me? This here check is a phoney; an' I got a good mind to take you along to the station now!" He eyed the other's shabby clothes with extreme disfavor.

"You know that you can do nothing of the sort," pointed out Humboldt calmly, "until you have found Mr. Dixon."

"Well, I'm gonna find 'im soon enough. An' now I'm gonna search this house." He made another forward movement. Still Humboldt did not move.

"You have a warrant?"—his voice was cold.

Again the policeman stopped and glowered. "Hard guy, ain't yu?—Well—"

He was interrupted by the sound of a heavy truck rumbling up the drive. He turned. "What do these guys want?"

Humboldt's lips tightened. "That is none of your affair!"

"No?—We'll see about that . . . Hey! What do you guys want?" He addressed the driver, who had by now climbed down from his seat.

The driver looked alarmed—then indignant. "Why, we got the coffin . . . We was to deliver it here—a lead coffin. An' damned heavy it—"

"Oh, a *coffin!*" the officer cut in. He swung around upon Humboldt. "Is *that* all? . . . Say there's something damned funny about this house . . . " He looked up and down, apparently including the entire house in his broad sneer. "We got a lot of complaints about noises in this house last night—screams like . . . An' now a *coffin!*"

Suddenly he swung around, and bellowed at the gaping truck driver. "Take that thing down to the station-house, an' leave it there. We don't have no funerals around here without the undertaker! And as for you—" he turned to Humboldt—"I'm comin' back—get me? . . . *With* a warrant—"

Suddenly he stopped, and gaped at the other. "What the hell have you got on your face?"

A chill shot through Humboldt. He stiffened. Then: "That, also, is none of your affair," he said softly.

The officer favored him with a look of concentrated venom. "All right, Wise Guy—you wait!"—he stamped down the steps Humboldt closed the door.

He walked very slowly, and with clenched fists, to a mirror. One glance was enough to tell him what he wanted to know, but he stared for a long time with a kind of fascination at his terrible face. Then he turned, and walked out of the house. He noted without surprise—scarcely with interest—that the grass, up against the front of the porch, was black—burnt-looking. He looked up at the window of George's bedroom.

A maple tree grew near the house, and a large branch forked towards that window. The leaves were not green. They, too, were black and burnt-looking. Humboldt laughed harshly.

Study the Rays! Much chance he would have! You couldn't study a thing that crumbled your body—stole your reason . . . Even his one little gesture had been thwarted, he thought bitterly. He had hoped to protect the world from George with a lead shield. And they had taken that . . .

He would be the second to go—but not the last. Perhaps the policeman would be the third. He would warn him . . .

Warn him! Again he laughed. He would say, "Don't go into that house—warrant or no warrant. In there is invisible Death. I don't know what it is. It comes from out of the skies."

And the policeman would say, "Gettin' funny, huh?"

But even if the policeman were convinced, and didn't go in, the Rays would spread—through the grass, through the trees, through the ground. How much air could they traverse?

What were they? He called them "Rays". He had made a word picture for them. But it was a word picture—nothing more. This he knew: that they were *something* that fed on Earthly substances—mainly living things, it seemed. How could you stop a thing like that . . . '?

He stiffened suddenly; his jaw set; and he strode swiftly to the road,

and down the hill towards the town. He would try once more. He might beat the policeman to it. He smiled grimly. Thief, forger, buyer of drugs, possibly murderer—he would try to beat the Law once again. He would commit one more crime—perhaps two . . .

Ten minutes brought him to a filling station. "Do you have any five-gallon tins?" he inquired of the attendant.

"Yes, sir!"

"Well, my car is out of gas—up in Mr. Dixon's garage. I want you to fill two tins, and drive me up there."

"Well, I can give you a gallon; and then you can stop by here, and—"

"Do what I say!" snapped Humboldt, "and don't stand too near me."

The other merely gaped at him.

"Get it!"—Humboldt threw a roll of bills at the attendant. The latter succeeded in mastering his astonishment.

"Yes, sir!" he cried. He filled the cans, and placed them in a rickety car. Humboldt got into the back seat.

"Go up the driveway, and set them over at the front," he directed. The other pulled up before the front steps.

"Don't you want them in the garage?" he objected.

"Do as I say," said Humboldt again. The man deposited the cans on the steps, and prepared to go.

"Had a fire?" he inquired chattily, looking around at the grass.

Humboldt did not answer. He lifted one of the cans, and lugged it into the house. He heard the car rattle away.

From the kitchen, at the back of the house, he secured a dipper; and began methodically to scatter the liquid in all the rooms—on the floors, walls, ceilings, and furniture. He hurried, running from one room to another. His legs felt numb; he was a little dizzy; and then there was the policeman . . .

He went upstairs. In one of the rooms he found a closet, which had a tiny window looking out upon a grove of trees at the back of the house.

"Private in back," he muttered, with an approving smile. Then he tried the key in the lock, and put it on the inside. He went on with this work. Upon the thing that had been George Dixon he poured a gallon of the fluid. Then he went downstairs and out of the house.

There was no one in sight. The grounds were fairly spacious, the nearest house being over three hundred yards away. Slowly he walked around the house, emptying his second tin on the walls and porches—

on the grass. Lastily, he laid a little tin train of it out across the back yard . . . It was getting dark.

He lighted a cigarette; and, stooping, dropped the match on the last little splotch of gasoline. A tiny flame shot up, and ran towards the house.

He walked slowly around to the front; and went in, locking the door behind him. He sat down on the staircase; and, reaching into his pocket, drew out the little bottle of morphine and the syringe. Might as well make use of it, after all, he thought with some satisfaction.

The sight of his hands sickened him: ugly, black—looked as if they might fall apart . . . He charged the syringe from the bottle.

Perhaps he was saving other people from having hands like this. Deprived of food, this "life" or whatever it was from another star, might die a natural death. Then again it might not. But the chances were that he was doing a whole lot of people a lot of good . . .

He dug the needle into his leg, and laughed. Anyway, he had nothing to lose! A fine hero! . . . Julius Humboldt had always found it hard to be sentimental . . . He got to his feet, and slowly climbed the stairs. It was difficult to move. He went into the closet, and lifted the tiny window. A roar and a wave of hot air greeted him. He drew back with a smile, and locked the closet door.

A tongue of flame shot up past the window, licking at the sill. He gazed at it admiringly. Wonderful stuff—fire! . . . Clean . . . pure . . . vital . . . Highest state of matter.

The heat was choking him now. The roaring and the heat were now tremendous . . . He laughed.

Robbery . . . forgery . . . murder . . . arson . . . and now, one more!

He tossed the key into the flame.

SPACE STORM *(continued from page 65)*

Gardner looked. Below them spread the great runways and radiating cradleways of the Port. The air levels beneath were dotted with tiny craft darting hither and yon like excited and aimlessly flying insects. And, hovering only a few hundred meters from the *Hyperion,* was a little one-man helicopter. Her tail carried the color stripes of the lookout service, her nose a name.

It was at the name young Stark was laughing. And when Gardner had spelled it out, he too was forced to sounds of merriment.

"*Calliope,*" the neat lettering spelled. There *was* such a vessel after all. But not the sort the mutineers had been counting on out there in space.

Gardner hoped for a moment that none of the men would see, but the grin of contentment never left his countenance as they swooped down to a landing.

The Reckoning

Enough time has passed so that I can report to you on both our Summer and Fall 1968 issues--#7 and #8. In both instances, the covers brought forth only one dislike vote, and Wesso's spider on #8 was generally much appreciated.

Here is how you rated the Summer issue: (1) *The Fires Die Down,* Robert Silverberg; (2) *Not by Its Cover,* Philip K. Dick; (3) *The Elixir,* Laurence Manning; (4) *Men of the Dark Comet,* Festus Pragnell; (5) *Away from the Daily Grind,* Gerald Page. Silverberg is the first author to come out on top with a new story in our pages, and Dick gave him close competition all the way through.

The Fall issue came out thus: (1) *Dark Moon,* Charles Willard Diffin; (2) *The Eternal Man,* D. D. Sharp; (3) *The Maiden's Sacrifice,* Edward D. Hoch; (4) *Why the Heavens Fell,* Epaminondas T. Snooks, D. T. G.; (6) *The Eld,* Miriam Allen deFord. For a brief spell at the beginning, Sharp came into the lead, but after that it was Diffin all the way.

First Fandom

by

ROBERT A. MADLE

This is the second in a series of articles on the organization known as FIRST FANDOM. The first article (Fall 1968 issue) discussed the organization in general, touching upon its philosophy, purpose, and activities. Briefly stated, FIRST FANDOM's goals from the beginning have been to gather the old-time readers, writers, and collectors into one cohesive group, and to pay homage to the great men of science fiction who, in fact, have created and molded the field into a highly popular and accepted form of literature.

FIRST FANDOM holds three scheduled meetings each year: at the Midwestcon (a regional conference held in Cincinnati, Ohio, the last weekend in June); at the Westercon (also a regional conference held in one of the West Coast cities over the July 4th holiday); and at the annual World Science Fiction Convention (wherever it might be held). In 1968 the World Convention was held in the Oakland/Berkeley area; a discussion of the FIRST FANDOM meeting held at the Baycon follows.

FIRST FANDOM meetings are, to say the least, unusual. In fact, they are advertized as "Party/Meetings". They start extremely late: this is so as not to interfere with the scheduled Convention programming. At the Baycon, the convention program lasted until almost midnight the first day. Therefore, it was approaching midnight when the earliest attendees arrived. Within 15 minutes, close to 100 members and guests were actively participating in the "Happy Hour" that preceded the meeting. The meeting was held in the largest suite in the hotel (thanks to Lou Tabakow, who made it available). As can be visualized, calling a gathering of this size to order in the

described environment is no mean accomplishment. But, at 12:30 AM, everyone got down to FIRST FANDOM business–supplemented by some degree of levity, it must be admitted.

The Baycon meeting was probably the largest yet held. The attendance list reads like a Who's Who in Science Fiction: Lester del Rey, Robert Bloch, Edmond Hamilton, Leigh Brackett, Donald A. Wollheim, Emil Petaja, Jack Williamson, Frederik Pohl, Harry Harrison, Ross Rocklynne, and Philip J. Farmer. Add to these such prominent fans and collectors as Sam Moskowitz, Forrest J. Ackerman, Walt Daugherty, Vernell Coriell, David A. Kyle, Gus Willmorth, Don Day, Alva Rogers, Roy Squires, James Hevelin, Walt Liebscher, and Lou Goldstone. Then there were the *real* old-time fans, known as the "Eo-Fans"– they precede FIRST FANDOM: Aubrey McDermott, Lester Anderson, and Clyde Beck. Top all of the above off with some of the FIRST FANDOM regulars, such as: Herbert Schofield, Wm. E. Evans, Edward Wood, Frank Andrasovsky, Lou Tabakow, Doc and Sue Miller, Stan Vinson, Arthur L. Widner, Samuel D. Russell, Roy Tackett, Stan Woolston and many more.

The meeting lasted for almost two hours and it would not be feasible to discuss everything that ensued in detail. However, some of the items of more general interest will be mentioned at this time.

David A. Kyle was commended for the fine services he has been performing for the organization. In recent months he has handled the development of the blazer patches (certainly the most attractive blazer patch this scribe has ever seen), obtained ties imprinted with the FIRST FANDOM emblem in color, and independently surprised the membership with the first two issues of *FIRST FANDOM NEWSLETTER.* Dave intends to continue this lively member-oriented publication on a six-weekly basis.

At one time, some members were considering pooling their resources and publishing, as a one-shot, a professional science fiction magazine which would reincarnate the early era of s-f. In fact, for a time the group seriously planned to revive *SCIENCE WONDER STORIES.* This project, too vast and complicated, did not materialize. It was noted that FIRST FANDOM could drop the idea of this project completely because it has, coincidentally, already been accomplished. To prove it, copies of the Fall *FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION* were passed around and the membership was informed on Bob Lowndes' other reprint magazines.

Ed Wood discussed the current publishing project now underway. It is planned to reprint in book form all ten issues of *THE TIME TRAVELER,* which was the first real science fiction fan magazine. It was published in 1932 by Allen Glasser, probably *the* fan of that time. If this should prove successful, reprints of other early fan publications will probably follow.

Two new members were taken into the very select Associate Member group. They were Jack Chalker and Bob Hyde. Jack manages Mirage Press and the fan magazine, *MIRAGE.* Bob Hyde is President of

the Burroughs Bibliophiles. Both of these gents, although not old enough in science fiction years (pre-1938) to become regular members, became Associate Members based upon their proven interest in the aims and goals of FIRST FANDOM.

Several other interesting suggestions were discussed but not acted upon. One concerned the possibility of having an actual FIRST FANDOM Conference in addition to the regularly scheduled meetings. Another was termed, "Antique Hugos" –the suggestion was made that the membership should nominate and select "Hugo" winners for all the years preceding the issuing of such awards (1953, Philcon II, started it all). For instance, in the very first year of magazine science fiction (1926 *AMAZING STORIES)* would the best novel be *Station X* by G. McLeod Winsor, *A Columbus of Space* by Garrett P. Serviss, or *The Second Deluge* also by Garrett P. Serviss? Or maybe it would be *Beyond the Pole* by A. Hyatt Verrill Fascinating.

The concluding items on the agenda for the official meeting were the presentation of the First Fandom Hall of Fame Award for 1968 and the final selection of the recipient for 1969. Jack Williamson was the author paid homage to in 1968. Certainly one of the legendary writers in the field. Jack's first story appeared in the December 1928 *AMAZING STORIES, The Metal Man.* Since then, he has written scores of stories, some of the most memorable being *The Alien Intelligence, The Legion of Space, Darker than You Think,* and his two classic robot stories, . . . *And Searching Mind* and *With Folded Hands*. . . Jack Williamson is noted for new ideas and approaches; he pioneered in characterization, and uncovered the idea of anti-matter for s-f. He undoubtedly ranks alongside the previous Hall Of Fame selectees, E. E. Smith, Ph.D., Hugo Gernsback, David H. Keller, and Edmond Hamilton.

Four names were submitted for final selection for the 1969 recipient: John W. Campbell, E. Hoffmann Price, Seabury Quinn, and Murray Leinster. The winner was Leinster, Dean of Science Fiction, who has been writing in the field longer than anybody–whose earliest work appeared in what is claimed to be the first fantasy magazine, *THE THRILL BOOK,* published by Street & Smith and edited by Harold Hersey in 1919!

At this point, the meeting was officially adjourned, but nostalgia reigned supreme for the next few hours.

For the record, here is the current slate of officers of FIRST FANDOM: President, Robert A. Madle; Secretary Treasurer, Dale Tarr; Official Publisher, Lynn A. Hickman; Vice-President East Coast, Arthur Saha; Vice-President West Coast, Alva Rogers; Vice-President Europe, J. Michael Rosenblum.

THE DERELICT OF SPACE

by RAY CUMMINGS

(author of **The Girl in the Golden Atom**)

At the edge of the solar system, where no human beings had been before, this expedition came upon a derelict, clearly made by man, not some alien beings. It was just as clearly not a spaceship. What, then was it, and how came it here?

I FIRST SAW THE SHIP from our forward turret window. It had been observed, electro-telescopically, for an hour past but I had no opportunity to see it. Then to the naked eye it became visible—a tiny black dot at first, so small amid the blazing gems strewn on the great concave velvet of the firmament, that one might blink and wonder if it were a vision. Then it was a blob of formless shape, faintly illumined on one side by the dim light from distant suns.

The interior of our vessel clanged with the signals to stop our flight. The heavens swung in a great pendulum arc; and presently we were hovering, and the Ship of Doom—as always in my mind I shall term it—lay close before us.

I recall now with what strangely awed emotion I gazed through the glassite bullseye of that turret window. Around me was the torrent of

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excited questions of my companions; the clang of bells; the tramp of feet. But I scarcely heard it as I stared at this derelict we had come upon so suddenly, lying so silent and alone in the trackless infinitude of interstellar space. Millions upon millions of miles of nothingness were here. Behind us the sun of our solar system was a mere point of light, so far distant that most of its planets were lost in the stars, with only Apollo, that tenth and last outpost, near enough now to cast a faint reflected light upon us.

And here in this eternity of emptiness where we had thought ourselves the first of humans ever to penetrate, lay the derelict Ship of Doom. It hung now no more than a mile away. It seemed, from this viewpoint, to resemble an old-time spaceship of the sort which once attempted the Moon journey and failed to do more than rise out of Earth's atmosphere.

Yet, when soon we were approaching still closer, I saw that this could be no spaceship at all. It showed itself to be in form like a ball, flattened well down at its poles so that it had the aspect of a disc. I could not tell at first how large it might be. But Rance was steadily maneuvering us closer to it.

I saw at last that it was a coppery metal disc perhaps a hundred feet in diameter, with bulging convex bottom and top to give an interior height of some thirty feet. A deck encircled its outer rim—a narrow deck of what might have been glassite panes and with a row of bullseye windows. And in the center, upon the top of the disc a curiously bulging little conning tower was bravely set.

As we drew forward I saw that the tower was a woven mesh of wire strands. The disc seemed slowly rotating upon a polar axis so that all its deck windows passed our line of vision in a silent review. And between two of the bullseyes there was a small door-porte.

Rance called at me: "Good Lord, Allerton, see that door! It's partly open! There's no air in the damned thing! No one can be on it alive!"

I did not answer. Was anyone, dead or alive, within this strange little derelict? It seemed not. No face was at any of the bullseyes. And what was this little thing doing out here? It was not a spaceship. Even with my limited technical knowledge, I could not fail now to see that there was no visible means by which this strange affair could navigate space. Then how came it here? What human had devised it? And how had he brought it here? And where was he, with his little mechanism poised here in the vast eternal silences?

Or perhaps the thing had not come from Earth at all. Realization of my own fatuousness rushed upon me. To each human mind himself is

the pivot of the Universe. Why should I so childishly assume that this little thing had come from our tiny Earth when so many other worlds were closer?

Yet it had come from Earth. As though to answer the flood of my unspoken questions, a hand gripped my shoulder. It was old man Dorrance, father of our present commander. At seventy now, for all his white hair and the weight of his years there was not a man among us more capable of coping with the unknown. It was he who had brought us out here—he who seemingly would never turn back if a mystery lay ahead.

His hand gripped me. His voice brought me out of my thoughts. "That thing, I know what it is! I remember it, forty odd years ago, lad—that was before your time! So this was its end . . ."

And as he told me, I too recalled it by hearsay. Years ago, to an incredulous world, a scientist named Ronald Deely announced that he had found the secret of time-traveling. He had procured funds and built his little vehicle—this same disc-like vehicle which now lay so strangely inert before us. Old Dorrance poured out the tale to me now. There was Deely and his wife Hilda—and the commander was one Gerald Vane. With three other men, these dabblers into the unknown had one day entered their burnished disc for a time-flight fifty years into the future.

Ten thousand people—so old Dorrance said, and he had been one of them—had breathlessly stood and watched this disc depart. The current went into it. The thing hummed. The solid, burnished coppery shape grew tenuous. An instant and it was a wraith—the shimmering ghost of a disc. Imponderable, intangible—yet for a brief instant, visible. Then it was gone, speeding forward into time.

Yet, as Dorrance told me now, that time-traveling disc was not equipped to move in space. The concrete platform where it rested, to the eye of the beholder seemed empty when it departed. For that *time* it *was* empty. The disc presumably had gone fifty years ahead—yet it should have remained upon its platform, so that in fifty years the platform would again have caught up with it and possessed it.

Then why was the disc hanging out here now in space billions of miles from Earth? What trick had nature palyed upon these brash scientists who had dared to pry into her secrets?

A group of our men were around me and old Dorrance. Young Dorrance was saying: "No air in it! Did you see that door-porte? Partly open—I can make contact there. We'll board it—"

Somebody else exclaimed: "So it's the Deely time-ship? Out here—by God, forty years ago—"

"And if any of you men want to go aboard it with me, get into your pressure suits. We'll see what's there—no one alive, of course—this weird thing—" Young Dorrance's voice faded as he dashed from our turret.

"Wait!" said old Dorrance, "but I know why it's here. These young scientists—scatterbrained, always rushing to do something—let them get our suits ready."

I paused while he told me his theory; meanwhile Rance's brother was assembling our pressure suits. This strange thing—yet so simple . . .

The Deely time-ship had gone fifty years into the future. But Ronald Deely, coping thus with nature, had failed to make adjustments of time, with space. His little ship, once in the stream of time, plunging forward, became wholly disconnected from Earth. And Earth is not at rest in space, but swiftly moving. How fast, with absolute motion, who can tell? It follows our Sun, which in turn is drifting—and all the stars, all the Universe plunges—somewhere.

Deely had either overlooked this, or had been unable to make the necessary adjustments. His ship was whirled away into the infinity of interstellar space, fifty years ahead of the motion of our solar system—to wait fifty years for the arrival of our little planet to make a space and time contact.

I listened, amazed, as old man Dorrance explained it. Something undoubtedly had gone wrong with Deely's time-mechanism. He had reached his fifty-year goal, but could not, or at least did not, return. And here was his ship, with forty odd of those fifty years now past, waiting out its predestined meeting with Earth.

Awesome idea! Yet who could doubt its rationality? This then was where Earth would be in some ten years more. I stared at the Ship of Doom with a new amazement. It seemed very slowly rotating on its vertical exis. But was it? Was that not perhaps a mere visual illusion. Perhaps all the great firmament, with me in it, was endowed with that slow spin. Our turret instruments, trained now upon the little derelict and measuring its angles with the far-distant sun of the solar system showed that the derelict had a perceptible drift in that direction.

Thoughts are swift-flying things. They thronged me. Deely's ship, lying here, was drifting toward Earth. But of course! Why not? The proximity of the solar system—its total mass—was slowly, very slowly drawing the derelict toward it. That was understandable. That was reconcilable with the known laws of celestial mechanics.

2

BUT WAS IT? WAS THIS DERELICT drifting back home—or was Earth merely approaching their predestined meeting place. As I envisaged this commingling of time and space, it seemed to me that here might be the secret of gravity itself. And as I stared at the Ship of Doom I saw in it suddenly *absolute rest.* In all this great starry Universe, was this little time-ship which had tampered with nature, the only thing unmoving? I think so. Poised here for its fifty years, *unmoving*—like a pivot around which flowed the ceaseless changes of the cosmos.

"Perhaps that is so," old man Dorrance was saying. "So many things we think we know and find we know nothing . . . Yes, young friend, I want my pressure suit! Do you think the old man is likely to sit here doing nothing?"

There were four of us who went aboard the Ship of Doom. Our space-flyer came up to it very slowly. The silence and the motionlessness hung like a spell upon it. No faces at its little windows. Nothing moving on its little deck; no sign of life in its little turret. We could sense that death was here.

The four of us went across the void. We leaped from our ship, spinning emptiness landing gently on the Ship of Doom.

"Got it!" exulted young Dorrance. "Re-check your helmets . . . You, Jake, watch the valves—don't exhaust the lock too fast."

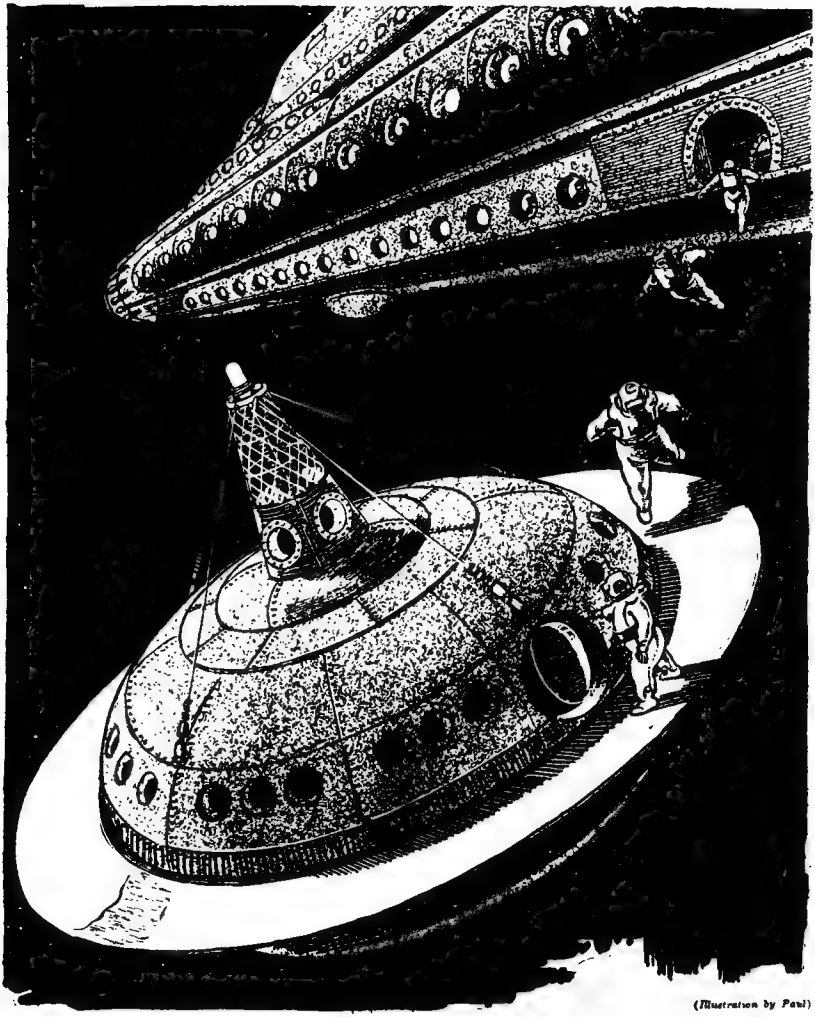
I re-checked the fastening of my goggling metal helmet to the heavy collar, and the mechanism of the suit. The fabric was properly bloated. Upon my shoulders the small oxygen tanks and the sponge-like absorbers of the carbon-dioxide sat like a hunchback's lump.

Through the visor pane my companions showed as gaping monsters from some strange planet, shapeless, puffed human forms . . . Old Dorrance touched a metal finger against the metal contact plate of my arm. My audiphone tinkled and I heard his voice in my ear. "Be sure you maintain a fairly even pressure, lad. Keep it at about fifteen pounds."

I could see his eyes staring at me through his visor. "Right," I said. "Don't worry—I've done this before."

We crowded into the small pressure chamber and the inner door slid closed. The valves opened. The air in the lock slowly rushed out into space and then at last we slid aside the outer panel.

Young Dorrance was first to bridge the small yawning gap between the two ships. His bloated, gloved hand seized the partly open door and



(*Illustration by Paul*)

There were four of us who went aboard the Ship of Doom. Across the void we leaped, landing gently . . . .

drew it aside. We crowded forward with the dim starlit little deck of the Ship of Doom curving before us.

What would we see? Wreckage? Carnage? There was nothing. A few small metal chairs stood neatly in a row. The curving deck was four feet wide and twice as high. A nearby inner door to the circular interior was closed. Nothing here.

But as I turned from this instant glance, I saw slumped here on the deck, a human form. A man, hunched forward with his arms wrapped around his updrawn knees.

"Dead!" said the voice of old Dorrance in my ear. "Dead, of course, these many years. No air—body marvelously preserved. Look at him—I remember him. Brown, the mechanic. Odd sort of fellow—I had a talk with him once."

He sat here by the opened outer door, as though he were on guard. Or perhaps watching the rush of air as it went out. His attitude seemed so calm, so resigned. Philosophical. The word hit me. This fellow here in his work-stained garments—philosophically watching death stalk upon him . . .

The body fell forward to the deck as my companions pulled at it like prowling ghouls. He was a man about thirty. A rough-hewn, good-natured looking face, now puffed up . . . bulging blue eyes.

But there were others on this Ship of Doom not so smiling . . .

The central portion of the circular disc was divided into two horizontal floors, and into several rooms on each. It was a dark and a silent interior of woven metal gridwork and metal furnishings. Our small torchlights flashed their tiny white beams around it.

The rooms were segments of a circle like a pie cut into quarters. Four on the lower tier; a little circular stairway leading upward to four other chambers, and a circular ladder into the upper tower. On the lower tier were the mechanism and control rooms; a storeroom of food; and a sort of general lounge. The sleeping rooms were upstairs; and in the tower were the observation instruments.

I gave little thought to these details. It was the dead which fascinated me . . .

The inner connecting doors were all tightly closed as though these doomed travelers had realized their danger and sealed themselves in to hold the precious air as long as possible . . . And we saw them now as they had chosen to be when death came upon them . . .

We chanced to enter first the room where the food was stored . . . Here was evidence of strife! Death had not been faced with utter calmness

by them all. The storeroom was wrecked as though by some desperate struggle. And on the floor lay another man's body. How different from the calmness of Brown the mechanic. This man lay contorted. And under our lights his head and face showed gruesome where some heavy instrument had smashed it with a murderous blow.

Murdered, this one—a struggle here, over the food doubtless.

Four other human bodies were on the ship—all of them were in the lounge room . . .

Upon a chair, with a small table before him, a young man sat slumped over a notebook and pencil as though he had been assiduously writing, almost at the last. A handsome young fellow, with sensitive features. The face of a dreamer. Staring dark eyes, which one could fancy looked at life always with amused wonderment. Above the almost girlish face there was a shock of waving black hair.

I gazed at the note-book in which he had been writing; its cover was inscribed: *The Chronicle of Philip Thomasson.*

Old Dorrance touched me. "He had more money than was good for him. Prominent social family. Only thing he ever did in life was finance Deely. And this Hilda Deely was mad with passion—but not for her husband. Everybody knew it—except the husband. That's Hilda Deely over there—look at here!"

Strange contrasts! Thomasson sat so calmly. But across the lounge there lay the body of a man who had not had the courage to die. His hands were tearing at his throat; an agony of terror was on his face; his thick tongue protruded. One could fancy that he had met his end screaming . . .

There were two others—a man and a woman. The woman was young and slim and very beautiful, with a mouth that seemed made for love, and eyes which even now in death seemed to hold love like a torch to burn eternally.

This was Hilda Deely. She lay on a couch wrapped in a man's arms, with the long tresses of her black hair falling disheveled to envelope them both, and his arms protectingly holding her. Together, never to be separated, death had come to these two. And upon both of them, with the prospect of death, it seemed that there must have come a strange tranqulity of spirit . . .

But what had happened on this doomed little vessel? What tragic scenes had been enacted of which we now were seeing the mere final tableau? What turgid, philosophical and exalted human emotions must have swept this half dozen humans in those last moments of their lives?

I can try to picture it. There is what we saw on the ship to guide me. And Thomasson's *Chronicle,* which with an ironical determination he seemed to have written in detail until almost at the last . . . And there is my own fancy, weaving it together; impressionistically perhaps, and with lapses—but weaving it nevertheless until I think that after all it may be a fairly true picture . . .

3

THE MOMENT OF DEPARTURE WAS AT HAND. In the lower mechanism room of the Deely time-vehicle, Brown the mechanic sat at his controls. Outside his glassite window he could see the awed and excited crowd which had assembled to witness the departure. But Brown wasn't interested in the crowd. That sort of thing meant nothing to him. This was a job he had to do. The risk, the danger—he was getting paid extra for that; he wanted no appause; there was no reason, he felt, that anyone should appaud him. Besides, waving flags and shouting and throwing hats in the air was childish.

Brown, with his stocky figure encased in a greasy worksuit, stood at his window for a moment, puffing at his pipe. The throng was cheering, gazing up to the tower of the time-vehicle. Brown knew that Professor Deely and his wife were up there, with Gerald Vane, commander of this time-flight. Brown, though he could not see them, knew that they were smiling and bowing to the multitude. He grinned ironically to himself. Deely was a fatuous ass to bring his wife in this close contact with a man like Gerald Vane . . .

Brown shrugged and turned away. It was no concern of his. For all of him, the woman could stand up there clutching roses to her breast, bowing and smiling, looking like the soul of purity—and yet have in her heart and mind nothing but duplicity. To Brown—who was a bachelor—it was of no importance.

And at that moment Hilda Deely and her husband were indeed in the tower, answering the plaudits of the crowd.

"Hilda, dear, isn't it wonderful.' Deely's arm went around his wife. He was a frail, studious looking man of forty. His shock of prematurely gray hair made him seem older. His face always bore the look of a man far away in spirit. He was an unworldly fellow, this Deely. He passed by the evil in the world without seeing it, for his gaze was always fixed on the stars.

His mind, learned, erudite, profound, was in worldly things that of

an innocent child. He sought for so many long hours each day to delve into the mysteries of Nature that the beauty of his young wife and her love for him became things he took for granted. Her inner life, her desires—the myriad illusions upon which a woman builds romance—all those were mysteries of Nature to which Deely never gave a thought.

"Isn't it wonderful, Hilda?" he repeated. "Listen to them cheering us." He tightened his arms around his wife's shoulders. "This is the happiest moment of my life."

He did not notice that she involuntarily drew away from his encircling arm. Gerald Vane stood close behind them darkly handsome, of flashing dark eyes, bold features and strong cleft chin, and with his broad athletic shoulders so trim now in the uniform with gold braid. Whatever his inner character, outwardly Gerald Vane was the sort of man upon which a woman may build her dreams.

And the earnest, tremblingly happy Ronald Deely did not notice that his wife's free hand went behind her so that in this moment while the crowd applauded, Vane gripped her hand and briefly held it with a tender pressure while between them passed unspoken a reassurance of their love.

"Well," said Vane, "we're getting the publicity, Deely. Every newscaster in the world is blaring of this. Shall we make another speech for the microphones?"

"No! No, I'm too excited. Hilda dear, isn't this wonderful? All these years I have worked for this—"

"Then let's get started," Vane interrupted. "This is a good dramatic time. Close that port."

"Yes, we'll start now. Hilda and I will sit here. There will be a starting shock, Hilda. Don't be afraid—I'll hold you."

Vane closed all the portes. In effect the little vehicle was a spaceship now, almost capable of withstanding an outer vacuum. "All ready?"

"Yes! Yes, Vane." Deely did not see the look which passed between his wife and Vane. For them this was a moment of crisis also. A moment of triumph. Hilda shrank against her husband; but to her mind it was Gerald Vane she was clutching. They would fling themselves out into the future. And in that world of the future, she and Gerald would escape from the ship . . . facing the future together . . .

Gerald Vane pulled at a lever. Down in the lower control room the phlegmatic Brown calmly and efficiently responded. The little vehicle glowed and hummed, and was flung into time . . .

In the lower lounge the two other men sat gripping their seats against the shock of starting.

"You all right, Thomasson?"

"Yes, I—I'm still here!"

"My God—this weird thing—where—where are we?"

Phil Thomasson half rose out of his chair, but sank dizzily back. The floor window-porte of the lounge room showed a gray luminous blur. The door to the little deck stood open, but nothing could be seen out there save the reflected glow of a small deck light.

William Mink repeated, "Where—where are we?"

The pale, byronic Thomasson smiled. "Just passing through day after tomorrow, I should fancy."

It was romance to young Phil Thomasson. He knew nothing of the science of it, nor cared. With his inherited money he had financed all this. An adventure. Freedom from the boredom of being a too-rich young man with nothing to do in life save dissipate wealth.

To the perspiring, frightened William Mink it was an adventure also. Mink was a thick-set, paunchy man of fifty. At forty he had thought to conquer the financial world. But now at fifty he was a pauper. His banks had failed and shattered his mind. His mentality now was far from normal, though he did not know it. Perhaps it never had been normal. One cannot work with the obsession of unbounded wealth, desiring nothing else in life but money, and be of normal mind.

Mink was a good friend of Gerald Vane. He had indeed, upon many occasions loaned Vane money. He would have financed this Deely expedition—for the publicity which in many ways he could have turned to financial profit—had not his fortunes crashed and Phil Thomasson come forward and financed it instead.

And so Mink was here as an escape from his troubles. But Mink had also another idea. There were secrets in the future of the world which he could learn. Secrets which when he brought them back would speedily make him rich again.

But now he was terrified, so that Phil Thomasson gazed at him with a sarcastic smile. "You're not much of an adventurer, are you? Brace up, Mink! We've started and we're still alive. That's a triumph, anyway."

Thomasson climbed to his feet unsteadily. "Jove, it's weird. Come on out on the deck, let's see what next year looks like. We're omnipotent, Mink. Little gods, with clay feet . . ."

****

4

THE REALIZATION OF WHAT the destiny of the flight might be came to them apparently hours after the flight had started. It came with a shock, but then the thing was wholly understandable to Deely and to Vane. Deely indeed, had thought of it as a possibility, but hoped it would not come to pass since he could see no way of changing it. The realization that finally came, that while they were whirling through Time, they were also hurtling through Space, brought to each of them a secret confounding. Their secret plans were awry. *The vehicle had actually separated from* Earth: and what they gazed at now through the turret bulls-eyes, was a luminous blurring vista of a starry firmament all in movement!

To Phil Thomasson it was less of a disappointment. He had thought to observe the follies of future generations and be amused; but after all it was amusing also to see these crazy swaying stars. And it was amusing to see the baffled, lustful Gerald Vane, and the baffled woman.

"But it's all right," Deely was trying to assure them, when the realization that they were in interstellar space, had finally penetrated. "We'll go into the future and then turn back. We cannot land anywhere—except back on Earth in what will always be the present time. The experiment is a success, Vane! Think of what an advance for science—look at those worlds out there!"

It was a blurred crazy Universe endowed optically with strange motion. The sun was drawing away. Saturn with his brilliant rings was coming forward . . .

"Don't you realize, my friends," Deely went on vehemently. "We're explorers into the unknown of space and time. You think we're moving? We're not. This vehicle of ours has found absolute rest."

He gazed at the bank of dials before him, with their whirring indicators. "We are in the future now. This is where Earth will be at this time which we have already reached. And we are going fifty years into the future! What realms of starry space we will see—where Earth will be fifty years from now! Think of it—no man has ever penetrated those realms—"

"A space trip!" murmured Thomasson. "Jove, we start for a time-trip and it turns out to be a voyage among the stars! That's funny."

"And what a trip," exclaimed Deely. "Think of it—"

Thomasson was smiling ironically. "I am thinking of it. We can't gaze into the future of Earth! Don't you realize, man, this is the Al-

mighty's little joke? You think with your science you can do everything, but you can't. The future has always been hidden from us, and it always will be."

"We—we're in no danger then," stammered Mink. "Nothing has gone wrong with your mechanism?"

"Of course not," Deely reassured excitedly. "My time mechanisms are working perfectly. I have conquered the secret of time. When we return, think what new facts we will have to add to science. Why, this involves gravity itself. It involves the cause of all movement. It shows that time is indeed the fundamental pivot upon which everything swings."

"Well," said Brown, "if everything's all right, I better get back to work. Them batteries maybe need renewin' already."

He tamped out his pipe and clambered down the ladder. "Chief," he called, "if Mrs. Deely needs any help gettin' the lunch, I'm ready any time."

"Hungry," said Deely, "of course we all must be hungry. Hilda dear, you go down and start things. I must stay here and make notes."

"Yes. Yes, Ronald."

"I'll help her," said Vane. "Come, Hilda."

In the small tower, crowded with the six of them, Hilda Deely had found herself pressed close against Gerald Vane. It seemed that everyone must hear the thumping of her heart . . . She and Gerald standing so close that it seemed she could feel the rhythm of his heart against her breast. Every beat of that strong heart of his was for her . . .

They descended the ladder and he turned suddenly in the empty lounge nd flung his arms around her. "Hilda!"

"Gerald, not so loud!"

"They can't hear us. Kiss me—"

"Brown may see us!"

"No! And what difference? He knows how to keep his mouth shut . . . Kiss me . . . He knows he'd lose his work with us . . . It drove me frantic up there in the turret, Hilda. The warmth of you . . ."

"Gerald, dear one . . ."

They snatched, like this, another moment of madness. Or ecstasy? Or love? To Hilda, it was all of those. "Gerald, I love you! Oh, take me away! Far away from everyone, Gerald—everyone but you."

And so the strange journey went on. A little world of itself, this Deely time-vehicle, hurtling into the future and out into the uncharted realms of interplanetary space. A world of six inhabitants . . . They went fifty years from their starting point. Then sixty years. The journey consumed

days of their life. And then Deely reversed the mechanism. Retrograding through time so that all the universe was adjusting itself and to the observers from the little tower it seemed that the solar system now so distant was again approaching.

Deely's mechanisms worked perfectly. For him it was a triumph. The dials recorded the passage of absolute time. Sixty years forward. Then the return. With what instruments he had at his command, Deely charted the apparent movements of the stellar universe. And his mind flung ahead. With a larger—a more powerful vehicle—the time transition could be greatly accelerated. Those sixty years had seemed about a week to the travelers now. Deely envisaged an apparatus which would penetrate sixty hundred, or sixty thousand years while the humans on it were experiencing only a few days.

Sixty thousand years! To what infinite realms of space such a ship would reach! The point where Earth will be sixty thousand years from now! Perhaps such a ship could land somewhere . . .

5

BUT DEELY NOW, WITH THE CARE and the precision of a true scientist, was heading back for a landing upon Earth. The time the voyagers had experienced would be about two weeks. And Deely knew that the laws of nature—unnameable laws, but inexorable—would allow him successfully to land at a point of time on Earth that same two weeks *after* his departure. He would have lived those two weeks, and those on Earth would have lived them. All devised by nature into rationality . . .

Deely was a careful man. No amount of enthusiasm now led him to want to take unnecessary chances. Two weeks was long enough for them to chance upon this voyage. They had brought food and water for a comfortable two weeks. It had seemed wholly adequate since they had intended to land in a future time-world of Earth where supplies would be available. And the batteries too, were safely adequate for no longer an operation than that.

"We'd better turn back," Deely had said to Vane. "Don't you think so?"

"Yes, I do. Stick to safety—always my idea, in everything."

Even in those stolen moments—safety in everything for Vane.

So they turned. It was just after they had passed the point at which they were still fifty years ahead of Earth when . . .

Gerald Vane and Hilda had been alone so much during this week of the outward trip, that Vane—playing always for safety—forgot his motto, Brown was generally in the lower mechanism room. Mink was always abstracted, brooding and morose. Thomasson was gay when there was anyone to listen—or if not that, he was immersed in an interminable chronicle for his own amusement; and Deely slept, ate and worked upon his scientific data.

It left Hilda and Vane with many stolen moments. A sweet intimacy—not yet cloying—for it made Gerald Vane ever more bold . . .

And then came that moment of the return flight when Deely received his crushing blow. It chanced to be, in the living routine of this little world, after the evening meal. One might call it "nearly midnight". Deely at this time was ordinarily sleep, worn to the point of exhaustion by his mathematics.

But this night he awakened. Hilda was not in their sleeping room, but it caused Deely no second thought for Hilda often remained up after he retired, sitting in the lower lounge with Mink and Vane. Deely suddenly found himself strangely wakeful. The problem on which he had been working after supper was unfinished, and now the solution of it seemed ready to be found.

He slipped from his bed, into slippers and outer robe and left the small triangular room. It was glowing with the strange iridescence of the time-current. The humming which always pervaded the interior of the disc was like music to Deely's ears. Outside his cabin window, through the bulls-eye pane, he saw the familiar vista of the stars—all blurred and unreal and flowing with a silent movement (in retrograde now) which marked the changing positions of the heavens with the years.

The upper tier of the small vehicle with its four cabins, had a narrow corridor bisecting it like a diameter line. The corridor was unlighted, save for the glowing metal walls. Deely, in his gray cloth gown and his rumpled white hair, moved along the corridor toward the spiral ladder leading to the tower where he knew Phil Thomasson would be on watch. He mounted the ladder. He might have heard soft voices from one of the rooms off the corridor had he stopped to listen, but he did not.

Thomasson greeted him. "Well, Deely, shouldn't you be asleep?"

"I couldn't—I can't sleep. I woke up with that accursed problem tormenting me. Stay where you are, Phil—I'll sit here. Or would you rather go to bed? I shall be here several hours, I imagine."

"I'll stay," said Thomasson. "What is sleep to me? I've been watching those crazy lurching stars. I say, one might read his destiny in them if

he were clever enough, mightn't he? And then he'd be worse off—realizing what hell lay ahead of him."

But Deely was already immersed in his formulae, with Thomasson watching him thoughtfully. A nice fellow, this Deely. Too impractical for a hard world of reality. A fellow who was bound to get hurt. It occurred to Thomasson rather too bad that one must be destined for disillusionment and heartache . . .

By some trick of fate, it seemed to Thomasson that there was a sudden stillness about the vehicle. Voices in a soft murmur came floating up the ladder to the tower room.

"Gerald dear, I must go—if he should awaken—"

"Nonsense, Hilda—you know he sleeps for hours."

"Gerald, please . . ."

"But I won't let you go now . . ."

Thomasson was about to speak—to say something, anything to drown the damning sounds. He had thought that Deely had not heard, but he saw Deely's face and its expression struck him dumb.

And again the voice of Hilda floating up to them. "Gerald—darling, I'm going. But kiss me—once more, oh hold me close—I don't want to leave you."

There seemed a strange blankness on Deely's face as though all his reasoning were paralyzed to leave him blankly staring. And slowly the blood was draining so that he was white to the lips.

"I say—" began Thomasson. But Deely's vague gesture silenced him as effectively as if it had been a roaring command. The murmuring had ceased momentarily. There was an interval while Deely stared blankly with his pencil still poised over the paper. Then the pencil dropped with a little thud and Deely was fumbling with his chair, trying to rise to his feet.

Thomasson found his voice. "Where are you going?"

"Downstairs. I guess—I think I want to go down . . ."

"But I say, I wouldn't do that." He put a hand on Deely's thin shoulder. "Take it easy, old fellow. Give it thought. I say—damn it, I'm sorry for you. Look here—don't go down there now."

Deely sank back. "I guess you're right. Give it thought . . . I guess you're right."

Mercifully, there came no more of the horrible words. For minutes Deely sat staring, with Thomasson regarding him. What was there to say? Thomasson could think of nothing. It is a tragic thing to sit and watch a man stricken by a knife thrust into his heart by the woman he loves. Deely seemed to realize it very slowly, as though the thing were

impossible, and all his facilities were numbed, groping with it. His pale blue eyes had been staring through the metal walls of the little tower; then at last they came and focussed upon Thomasson.

"You knew—this thing?"

"Yes. I knew it."

"And you did not tell me!"

"But how could I, old fellow? One does not go like a cad and tell his—"

"No. That's right. And Mink—he knew it?"

"I suppose so."

"And even Brown? So everybody knew it—everybody but me."

"But I say, Deely, look here—"

"And now I know it—at last. I guess you're right—give it thought—give it thought . . . You'll go down to bed now, won't you, Thomasson?" It was a gentle plea. "I want to stay here alone—to give it thought."

And Thomasson was glad enough to escape, for it was an awkward thing to sit helplessly and watch a man whose castle is clattering down into bits of broken glass at his feet.

"Yes, I'll go." He touched Deely. "I say, I'm sorry as hell. You know that."

"Yes—thanks."

Deely's gentle white face was vaguely staring with a confused stricken wonderment as Thomasson went down the ladder. The sleeping rooms were quiet. Thomasson, seeking his own, peered into the opened door-oval of Deely's as he passed it. Hilda lay there on her own couch, apparently asleep. Her black braids were on her breast. The pale, slim beauty of her face seemed so pure. Thomasson sighed, entered his own room and drifted, after an interval, into uneasy slumber.

A sudden, lurching shock awakened him. Something was wrong with the ship. He realized there was no humming, no vibration, no iridescent glow to the room-walls. The time-mechanism was not operating!

As he gained his feet Thomasson heard the distant shouts of his companions. In the corridor he ran into Hilda, a white spectre in her long filmy night robe. "Oh, what is it, Mr. Thomasson? What's wrong? Where is Ronald? I woke up—"

Gerald Vane dashed toward them. "Where is Deely? What in hell has happened?"

There was only wan starlight in the narrow upper corridor from its end windows. Vane was as white as the woman.

"Gerald!" She clutched at him, but he flung her off.

"Don't do that, you fool! Thomasson, where is Deely?"

In a nearby door-oval Mink appeared. "What is it? We're not—not wrecked? Are we in danger, Vane? In danger . . . " His voice shrilled and broke. He clutched at the door casement. In danger . . . "

From down on the lower tier Brown was shouting: "It's gone dead! Everything's off! What'll I do? The signals won't work to the tower—nobody answers."

Vane was rushing toward the tower ladder, and slowly the figure of Deely came down. He pulled his dressing gown around his thin shoulders and with a shaking hand smoothed his rumpled hair. But his voice was calm. "Don't get excited. No danger—I stopped our time-flight."

Brown arrived. "But Professor, them controls . . . "

"What matter, Brown? Come down to the lounge, all of you. I want to show you the stars through the window there. The firmament is rational—at last. The stars are very beautiful."

His gaze went to his wife. "Ah, Hilda—have you slept well? Too bad to awaken you."

"Look here," shouted Vane. "What are you talking about? Stopped our time flight? Why? And no one on guard in the turrent—"

In Deely's drab, mild eyes a sudden fire came. "Do as I tell you, Vane. All of you—come down to the lounge . . . Stop that sniveling, Mink . . . Hilda, you go ahead with Gerald. Don't let her fall, Vane. She looks so frightened . . . "

The strange force of Deely made them gather silently in the lounge. The vehicle was at rest, poised in the void of infinite space. Through the windows they could all see the motionless firmament, freed now from the distortion of their time flight. A vast bowl of black velvet—a hollow interior of unfathomable capacity with themselves hanging in its center—and everywhere now the motionless blazing worlds.

Brown found his voice. "Are we all crazy? We can't stop here like this! We haven't no air or water to stop. We'll be killed . . . "

Vane gasped: "Start the mechanism, Brown. You damn fool, don't stay here . . . "

"But I can't! Nothin' works! He . . . "

Vane turned upon Deely. "What have you done, you . . . "

Deely suddenly back away. He faced them all, with even a greater calmness. "I thought it would be a wise thing to smash the mechanism. I have no need of it any longer—so I smashed it."

"Death . . . " Only Mink could find voice—the words came with a shrill ascending scream. "Death! "Death—Oh, my God . . . "

As though all the scene were sharpened and reduced to miniature, Thomasson saw Mink clutching at his throat and screaming; Hilda, white as a beautiful wraith; and Gerald Vane, staring with dumb amazement, and then leaping upon Deely.

"Wrecked us? You—you—" His thickened tongue refused him. "You—wrecked—"

"Not I? It was you who wrecked us." Deely sat down on the couch, with pale eyes surveying them all. "You and the woman—wrecked us. All of you saw it—all but me, and no one bothered to tell me . . . Go to him, Hilda. There's nothing to stop you now. Go and take comfort in his loving arms."

But she only stood staring. Mink, still screaming, rushed away. And Brown, cursing to himself, dashed for his control room. Vane took a step, and whirled. "You—crazy—fool . . ."

"I was—but I'm not now. Hold her in your arms, Vane. Don't you see she's frightened?"

Thomasson gasped. "But I say, the wall might explode—hadn't we better try to repair the controls? Vane, come up to the tower. That's where he—"

"No use," Deely interrupted. And now he spoke vehemently. "You can't repair it. The walls won't explode—but our air is leaking out. We've a few hours—two or three. Sit down—if you've anything to do before death—any things to think about . . . Hilda, you belong in his arms. I shouldn't waste time if I were you. A few hours isn't very long for loving—like yours and his."

It seemed to the stricken Thomasson that she would fall. She swayed toward Vane, but his terrified hysterical glare and his words stopped her.

"You brought this on me! You with your pale face—your kisses—"

"Gerald—"

"You rotten little—"

Vile epithet, so vile that as Vane turned and staggered from the room Thomasson was impelled to take a menacing step toward him. But Deely said, "Come back, Thomasson! Don't bother." Deely was vaguely smiling. "She isn't—she didn't mean to be—quite that. Sit down, Hilda—it's too bad if you're going to lack the comfort of his love at the end—but I guess you are."

* * * * * * * * * * * *

6

IT ALL BLURRED FOR A MOMENT to Thomasson's shocked senses. One cannot be struck with the realization of death's inevitable nearness and maintain normality. It occurred vaguely to Thomasson that there was nothing to do. He found himself seated at the little table where he had done most of his writing, and on it before him was his note-book and pencil . . .

Nothing he could do, and death was coming. He heard, vaguely, the running footsteps of Vane and Brown as they dashed around the ship . . . They were trying to accomplish the impossible. And shouting frantically about it. Like struggling rats in a cage immersed in water . . . That was an amusing thought . . .

Thomasson stared across the starlit lounge at Deely and his wife. They sat numbly gazing at each other. Perhaps they were thinking of all the happy moments they had once had together . . . Thomasson felt himself like a man dazed by drink. This little ship was a tiny world in the silent void of interplanetary space, and because death was coming, madness stalked it.

All of them were mad . . . It was an amusing thought. Thomasson contemplated that this proximity of death was intoxicating. Perhaps they were all their real selves for the first time since childhood. Alcohol does that. The man of low breeding becomes more vulgar. The gentleman is punctiliously polite . . .

Thomasson was aware of a turmoil outside the room. The shouts of Vane and Brown. Thudding blows of metal against metal. Then a horrible agonized scream from Mink . . .

"He's locked himself in the food room!" Vane gasped. "Brown, get him out of there! Eating our food—more than his share—keeping it from us . . ."

They stood by the closed metal door. Mink was inside. They would hear him moving. Vane put his ear to the door. Mink was babbling to himself. "All this for me. Nobody can have any of it, but me. Food and drink—that's life. Nobody can die with all this food and drink."

Stark mad! Vane heard him fall over a cask of water. The gurgle as it spilled sounded horribly plain. Their precious water spilling, with this madman wasting it.

Vane's fist thudded against the door. "Mink, open here! Let us in!"

Brown shouted, "Say, you, open this door!"

But there was only silence as though Mink were crouching like a trapped animal.

Vane pounded harder. The door resounded with the blows of the heavy iron wrench which Brown was carrying. Then it suddenly occurred to Vane that there was no lock on the inside of this door.

"He's got things piled against it, Brown! Only that. Help me shove."

With their shoulders they heaved. The door yielded a little; there was an inch of space. And now, in the silence as momentarily they rested, they could hear Mink scuttling back and forth around the little room. An animal, trapped, in a frenzy of fear and hate. The boxes of food were clattering as he scattered them. And they heard his mouthing, mumbling words: "Food and drink. Nobdy can die in here . . . "

"Harder, Brown! Damn it—shove . . . "

The door suddenly went inward as the water casks and boxes which were piled against it were shoved backward. Over the litter, Vane and Brown tumbled forward. The dark, triangular room was scattered with broken boxes of food, and wet with spilled water. The light from the corridor shone on Mink as he crouched in his white night-robe. His hands were before him, with clawing fingers; his lips snarled with bared teeth and his eyes were blazing with maniacal fury. "You—go 'way! Get away from me!"

And as Vane recovered his balance the frenzied Mink was on him, clawing at him, gouging at his eyes, and the bared teeth closed on the flesh of his throat.

"Brown! Good God—help!"

Brown saw the two swaying forms in the blue tube-light glow from the doorway. Vane stumbled and fell. Brown raised his heavy wrench, crashed it upon Mink's head, and Brown staggered back, staring as Vane lifted himself from the gruesome thing on top of him.

"Did it, Brown! Good enough! He's dead—what of it? We've saved the food and water."

But Brown had never killed a man before. He stammered, "That—looks awful. Them brains—that . . . "

"Come on outside."

"Yes."

They stumbled to the corridor. Brown found himself still holding the wrench. He dropped it with a shudder. "I'm goin' to the deck. Cool off. That looked awful—that blood an' them brains . . . " He wavered away, muttering to himself.

Vane dashed to the lounge. Thomasson was at his little table. Hilda was in a chair, and Deely still sat on the couch.

Vane gasped, "Mink went crazy. Wrecked our storeroom—Brown

killed him with a wrench—look where he bit me. Stark, raving mad—the fool."

There was blood on Vane's neck and on his chalk-white face—some of it his own, and some Mink's. He wiped his face with his sleeve. "The crazy fool . . . "

Deely barely moved. "Sit down, Vane. No—close that door first. You're wise to come in here—this is the best place. We can hold the air a little longer in here."

Thomasson could feel that the air was going. His cheeks were hot and prickling as though the blood were trying to ooze out through the skin. His head was humming—or was the roar in his ears?

Vane slammed the door. "I don't want to die! Deely, can't you do something? Good God, we've got to do something—not just let ourselves die like this! Deely, for God's sake . . . "

"Nothing I can do, now," Deely said calmly.

"The control mechanism . . . "

"Didn't you see it, Vane?"

"Yes, I saw it. Brown and I saw it. You—you smashed it . . . "

"Yes. I told you that."

"But Deely, please—you can fix it. You know more it than Brown or me . . . "

Vane was whimpering like a child. "Hilda, tell him to fix it. Tell him, Hilda . . . "

But Hilda Deely only stared; and it seemed to the watching, fascinated Thomasson that there was a faint, very queer smile on her vivid lips.

"You'd better sit down," Deely said. "Save your strength—the air is getting very thin. Losing pressure fast . . . "

And just at that moment the air began escaping still faster. From a thousand places around the little disc-like vehicle as it hung poised in the vacuum of space, the precious air was leaking out. Brown, clinging to a chair on the curved starlit deck-corridor could hear the silence of everything broken by the faint hiss and whine of the air as it went out.

He found himself sitting on the deck by the small outer door-porte. Mink was dead. Soon the others would be dead. All of them, slowly dying . . . That was a good thing for Mink, dying so quickly. He hadn't lived to know that his brains were scattered like that and his skull like an eggshell . . . It was nice to die all at once . . . From inside he could hear the whimpering Gerald Vane. "I don't want to die! Deely, please . . . " But he was going to die.

Brown thought again how much better it would be to die all at once. He found that the door-porte lever was beside him. His hand had accidentally touched it; his fingers were gripping it. The was going out so slowly with this door-porte closed. It was awful to die, just a little at a time . . .

Brown's hand very slowly pulled at the lever. The door slid partly open. The rush of wind as the deck-air went out seemed like a graceful summer breeze. And then a gale . . . It blew so strong it took your breath away . . . He had to grasp a support with all his might to keep from being blown into interstellar space.

Brown's head slumped down on his updrawn knees . . .

Deely gazed across the lounge toward the closed corridor door. "Going fast now. Listen to it whine. Something outside must have broken."

Vane was collapsed in a chair. Whimpering and then began screaming. "Stop it! Don't let it go! You fool—you murderer—don't let it go! I don't want to die . . . "

Thomasson thought how foolish it was to rail like that. Vane was coughing, choking. He was a pitiable object—the man who had once been strong, handsome, so virile-looking—so romantic. He was a pitiable object now. No, not pitiable—no one should pity Gerald Vane. He looked stricken of all his manhood now. Or perhaps he had never had any manhood . . .

Under the gaze of Hilda's calm eyes, and that faint queer smile on her white lips, Gerald Vane screamed his protests—choking and gasping in the rarefied air until suddenly he had fainted . . . "Hilda—" On the couch Deely himself was gasping now. "Hilda—in a moment—we'll be gone—"

"I know—" She tried to rise to her feet, but the room must have whirled before her. "Ronald! Where—are you? I—I can't seem to see you."

"I just thought, Hilda—now at the last—you might have something to say to me. If you—have something . . . "

She wavered, with hands outstretched, across the few feet that separated them. And on the couch his eager arms caught her. "Hilda—my wife again . . . "

"I want to say—if only you could forgive me, Ronald . . . "

"I do! I do, Hilda . . . "

The roaring in Thomasson's head seemed to drown their murmured words. The triangle of metal with its concave, low ceiling was pale and wan with starlight. But it roared—as Thomasson's head was roaring.

And the door was straining with the outgoing, whining sucking wind . . .

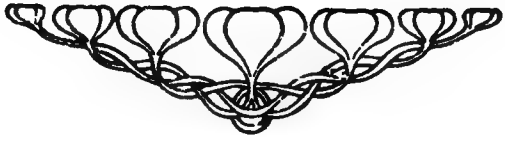
Every breath was an effort. Trying to breathe, and there was nothing to breathe. Vane's dead body seemed so hideous, over there in the chair. But on the couch Deely and Hilda were lying together wrapped in each other's arms. They were tranquil, peaceful in death.

It was all swiftly blurring before. Thomasson's fading senses. Roaring and blurring, and then it slid away into a great and everlasting silence . . .

Thomasson had fallen forward over his little table . . .

AND THUS WE FOUND THEM, with the air gone so that their frozen bodies were preserved through the years and the final tableau of this drama, or comedy, or tragedy—call it what you will—was clear before us.

We did not attempt to take the Deely time-ship back to Earth; but left it there, with its six passengers untouched. As young Dorrance turned us back and set our course toward Apollo and the Earth, I was at a rear turret window. The little disc-like vehicle, with its small tower bravely set on top, seemed hung askew. Little Ship of Doom. I watched until it was lost among the blazing stars.



BOUND TO BE READ

(continued from page 49)

means ideal. And in that frame, the story deals with a catastrophe approaching: a fifty million megaton meteor is approaching Earth, and cannot be shunted off course; it is going to strike, and the only recourse is to get the millions within the danger area out of the way. There are, of course, (could it be otherwise with Blish and Knight?) various subplots, some of which appeared as separate novelets: *The Shipwrecked Hotel* and *The Piper of Dis,* in *GALAXY,* and *To Love Another,* in *ANALOG.* If you have read these stories, you will still find sufficient new material in the complete novel, although I deeply regret that the wonderful final sentence of the magazine version of *The Shipwrecked Hotel* just wouldn't work in the book.

The member of the team I'm acquainted with insists that this is a long novel, and I suppose Jim is right; it just didn't seem very long when I was reading it, but that is to its credit. What is wrong here is that, even so, the book has nothing like the length the theme really needs. I may exaggerate if I say it needed three books this length, but I don't believe it's an exaggeration to say that it needed two. Nonetheless, I'm grateful for what we have, and those who did not read the excerpted novelets will find the Shipwrecked Hotel episode fabulous, the Jones Family Convention episode hilarious, and the Triton-human marriage episode moving, in addition to the mounting tension of the worlds-colliding theme, which I find satisfactory in its dramatic working out, even if, as has been charged, there is a scientific flaw. It has further been charged that some of the characterizations and motivations, etc., are pulp-level; I do not find the charge relevant. On the contrary, after some of the tedious explorations of inner space that pass for superior science fiction these days, according to some views, *A Torrent of Faces* is something to treasure.

RAWL

SCIENCE FICTION BY GASLIGHT

A History and Anthology of Science Fiction in the Popular Magazines, 1891-1911--Edited by Sam Moskowitz.

The World Publishing Company, 2231 West 110th Street, Cleveland 2, Ohio; Photography by Christine E. Haycock, M.D.; 364pp; $7.95.

First of all, this is the finest bit of book production on a Moskowitz anthology that I have seen; it's a delight to look at and look through, and Dr. Haycock did a splendid job of getting clear photographs of the artwork from the old magazines from which the selections were taken. Second, every story was fun to read, and even though some were not worked out as thoroughly as I had hoped they would be, none were nearly so bad reader-cheaters as many stories published later in the regular science fiction magazines. (As late as 1931 we had stories with "only a dream" endings, or the great scientist dropping dead just as he was about to give the final demonstration of his worked-shaking

discovery, etc. That second example, was in 1930, though, and the same issue of *AMAZING STORIES* contained an only-a-dream tale.)

The long introduction, a history of the popular magazines during the period, is entirely fascinating; and although I have heard complaints of error, I'm in no position to ascertain either whether the critics are correct where they say the anthologist is in error, or whether the error is of substantial importance even so. In any event, no single historian can get to *every* source, nor can he know at times whether a source he relies upon is not so reliable as he believed; this is the case with every other variety of history, and the first history of anything is most likely to contain some faults. So I suggest that you enjoy this as a fascinating account a fabulous period, and let the matter of omissions or corrections wait for further histories.

I do have a few minor complaints. *Finis,* by Frank Lillie Pollock, was reprinted in the very first issue (August 1963) of *MAGAZINE OF HORROR,* under the title: *The Last Dawn.* Sam mentions the *reprint* of this version in Kurt Singer's *Horror Omnibus,* but not MOH, from which it was taken. (Incidentally, Moskowitz's date for the original publication of the story, June 1906, is correct; the date I listed in MOH, 1905, is an error.) *The Doom of London,* by Robert Barr, was reprinted in the July 1954 issue of *FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION,* and in the Spring 1967 (#15) issue of *MAGAZINE OF HORROR.* Since Sam himself did a special introduction for the MOH version, I wonder why these appearances weren't mentioned.

And I cannot agree with his contention that Edgar Rice Burroughs' characterizations were superior to those of H. G. Wells, though the point he is actually making, as to the reason for Burroughs' instant popularity is a valid one. Burroughs drew vivid, memorable caricatures; mention his name to anyone who has read the Tarzan or other series, and the names of various characters therein are likely to spring to mind at once. While Wells concentrated on generally very ordinary people, quite fully presented, and you have to think a bit to remember their names, for the most part. Again, though, this is not characterization that is the issue; it's color. Colorful posters stand out better than many masterpieces of art.

The contents consist of *The Thames Valley Catastrophe,* by Grant Allen (1897); *The Doom of London,* by Robert Barr (1892); *A Corner in Lightning,* by George Griffith (1998); *The Tilting Island,* by Thomas J. Vivian & Grena J. Bennett (1909); *Finis,* by Frank Lillie Pollock (1906); *An Express of the Future,* by Jules Verne (1895); *The Ray of Displacement,* by Harriet Prescott Spofford (1903); *Congealing the Ice Trust,* by Capt. H. G. Bishop, U.S.A. (1907); *Lord Beden's Motor,* by J. B. Harris-Burland (1901); *The Death-Trap,* by George Daulton (1908); *The Air Serpent,* by Will A. Page (1911); *The Monster of Lake LaMetrie,* by Wardon Allan Curits (1899); *The Voice in the Night,* by William Hope Hodgson (1907); *The Land Ironclads,* by H.G. Wells (1904); *The Dam,* by Hugh S. Johnson (1911); *Submarined,* by Walter Wood (1905); *The Purple Terror,*

by Fred M. White (1899); *Professor Jonkin's Cannibal Plant,* by Howard R. Garis (1905); *An Experiment in Gyro Hats,* by Ellis Parker Butler (1910); *The Hybrid Hyperborean Ant,* by Roy L. McCardell (1910); *When the Air Quivered,* by L. T. Meade & Robert Eustace (1898); *In re State vs. Forbes,* by Warren Earle (1906); *Old Doctor Rutherford,* by D. F. Hannigan (1891); *Itself,* by Edgar Mayhew Bacon (1907); *Citizen 504,* by Charles H. Palmer (1896); and *The Mansion of Forgetfulness,* by Don Mark Llemon.

I found the catastrophe and monster stories the most effective in general; the Hodgson retains it power, and I agree with the anthologist about the merit of *Lord Beden's Motor* which is a splendid combination of science fiction (for its time) and the psychic. But, to repeat, all are fun to read, despite the limitations of some. This makes a very fine companion volume to H. Bruce Franklin's anthology *Future Perfect,* which presents a number of much earlier examples of 19th century science fiction and scholarly, well thought-out discussions of the authors and and of science fiction, as well. I wouldn't be without either collection. RAWL

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WORLD-WIDE ADVENTURE

Down To Earth

(Continued from page 7)

each time, but breaking no further trails. Both therefore are at least theoretically still risking disaster, just as Dr. E.E. Smith did actually when he tackled a theme which was utterly beyond his powers.'

"An artist who does not risk disaster--that is, one who is not exploring new areas of experience and new aesthetic solutions--is a dead artist, whether he knows it or not. There is more to gain in terms of richness and knowledge for the future than from a predictable reworking of something that was previously successful. Elevator men amaze me. The mind of a man who stands in a small box for hours every day, just riding up and down, is as alien to me as any being from another world that we might meet in science fiction. But the science fiction author who spends his days riding up and down in the world he may have discovered or borrowed years ago is not much better off--both are in a box and both have limited vision.

"Among that small band of the most adventurous creative people who are alive, Pablo Picasso is one of those who most capture my imagination. He regularly completely rethinks his aesthetics. He least of all knows what he will invent next and has often spoken of his work in terms of a *corrida*--a potential disaster in which the artist risks being gored by his failure--and he never knows into what discoveries and realms his work is going to lead him. In fact, one of his monumental struggles is recorded on film and ends in failure. The film medium became the arena of the spectators and I'm afraid the unfamiliar eye of the camera unmanned the master--the painting was a disaster. Later, in privacy, he returned to the battle and produced a fine work on, I think, the corpse of the old.

"Of course, Picasso rages in where angels fear to tread: few authors would be able to write a creative work of fiction in view of millions of people, either. But a lack of adventurousness in science fiction is difficult to understand--after all, the rewards in terms of tools for work to come are great, and authors have editors to perform the *pique* and, if it comes to that, plunge the dagger into the throats of unsuccessful efforts.

"Have *you* risked disaster, lately?"

I'll second these ideas providing they aren't taken to mean that an author has to locate "new areas of experience and new aesthetic solutions" that are absolutely new discoveries. If they are new *to him*, then it is not all-important whether someone else has worked in this territory, too. Despite the origins, the

result might be original. The notion that *all* experiments ought to be published and paid for, of course, is something else–and too absurd to waste energy in discussing.

WARHOON went into deep sleep shortly after winning the Hugo, though not because of it, and was missing for a couple of years, but has recently been revived on its previous quarterly schedule. The November (#25) issue should be out by the time this appears in print, but for a sample copy, #24 (August) might be a better bet for interested readers, since it contains part one of *A Wealth of Fable,* by Harry Warner, Jr., dealing with that fabulous Irish fan, Walt Willis, and *Reflections on "Dangerous Visions",* by Ted White. Walter Breen, James Blish, Walt Willis himself, and I also contribute regularly, and there is a lively letters department. I might add that I contribute regularly because over the years I've found *WARHOON* a very fine amateur magazine, mostly relating to science fiction and fantasy in some way, but it is up to others to decide whether, *if* it's a good magazine, it is good partly because of my appearances or in spite of them. Mr. Bergeron's address is 11 East 68th Street, New York, N.Y. 10021, and he charges 60 cents for issue #24, which runs to 62 neatly and clearly mimeographed pages, letter size, including interesting artwork and covers by the proprietor.

Richard C. Hodgens writes from Glen Ridge, New Jersey: "I have just finished reading *Science Fiction As Delight,* and I appreciate your general conclusions, and your remarks on C.S. Lewis and Robert A. Heinlein in particular. It is odd that CSL never approved of space travel--or never *seemed* to, even though the travel in *Out of the Silent Planet* and *Perelandra,* in itself, is the most poetic appreciation ever written. But I suppose that, for CSL, space travel was irrevocably associated with the philosophies of such fellows as H.G. Wells and J.B.S. Haldane.

"And it is true that RAH *does* win all those Hugos, for all the 'reaction' --whether the 'reaction' is regarded as his own or his *critics'.* I would not know how 'anxious', or not, he may be, but you put it very well: his 'assault . . . will come out in the course of a story . . . '

"There was a time when I disagreed with RAH, or thought I did. But I realized that I was not disagreeing with RAH so much as I was disagreeing with his *characters.* And, you know, I'd *met* characters like that (only not so bright), and had disagreed with them in person. RAH writes with a point of view, but it is always thoroughly embodied in a credible character–first person or third. It is never *imposed.*

"As for 'obscurity', it's E.E. Smith I always find obscure. I don't know why, but suspect that it is matter of style."

The question of whether Heinlein *imposes* viewpoints upon the reader remains controversial, and I notice that the more or less "liberal" minded critics maintain that he has done so increasingly in recent years. I don't agree, but will allow that the viewpoints in recent years may not be so carefully ticketed back to the character or characters related as in some of the

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or see page 125

earlier works. Which just requires more slow and careful reading, as well as non-emotional thought--demands which some critics feel should not be made upon readers.

You can very easily fall into one absurd extreme in the attempt to avoid the opposite absurd extreme. It is no less nonsensical to assume that *no view or opinion which an author holds, or ever held* is expressed in his fiction than it is to assume that *all* views or opinions expressed in the fiction represent the author's stand. Two other extremes are that you cannot possibly ever derive an author's views (or at least some of them) from a careful reading of most of the published fiction and that you can tell them at a glance. Yes, accurate deductions can be made--but the critic who assumes his deductions are correct, without the author's acknowledgment, is running against heavy odds that favor his being in grievous error.

In addition, there's a wide difference between likes, preferences, and convictions--the latter being the basis upon which the person actually behaves, what he really does as compared to what he says and writes. I *like* Velikovsky's hypothesis as to the dating of events in the ancient world which took place in the times covered in the Old Testament; I *prefer* it to the more "orthodox" dating. But I'm not under the illusion that my liking and preference constitutes any proof, or even evidence, that this hypothesis is in fact the truth; so when it comes to behavior on this matter, I have no grounds for going any farther than saying that the "orthodox" hypothesis doesn't satisfy me--

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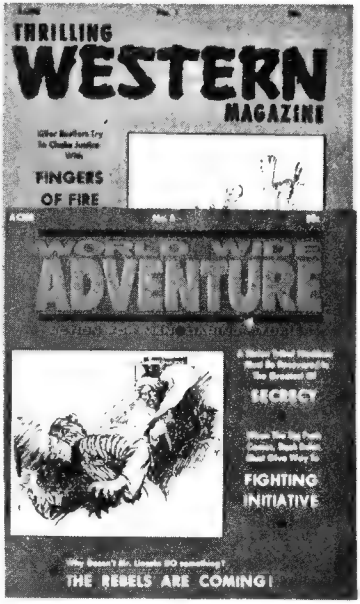
which again is no proof or evidence that Velikovsky is right: both could be in error.

David Charles Paskow writes from Philadelphia: "Noticing no copyright, I assume that the Silverberg (*The Fires Die Down),* Page *(Away From the Daily Grind),* and Dick *(Not by Its Cover)* stories were new. I hope new stories by the pros will continue to appear, even if only in the short story length. A problem arises, however, in rating. One must use two standards in judging the stories: (1) the classic story which may have flaws because of time but remains a classic for its time and (2) the contemporary story, whose claim to fame may not be immediately apparent. Anyway, the ratings for #7 came out thus, with me: 0-*The Elixir;* 1-*The Fires Die Down;* 2-*Men of the Dark Comet;* 3-*Not by Its Cover;* 4-*Away from the Daily Grind.*

If I believed in rating editorials, you'd have placed between Manning and Silverberg. Oh, to have been here in the good ol' days. Unfortunately, unforseen circumstances delayed my entrance into the world until *AMAZING STORIES* was 21 years old. Your editorials help recreate these bygone days and they are the first thing I read in each new issue."

Your opening assumption is correct.

It's good to be aware of "double standards" as you put it in judging the stories, but I wonder if you aren't carrying the matter too far—making a problem where there really is no problem. What is useful to me in these stories ratings is not how much or how little literary value the reader



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places on a given story in an issue, but a rough scale of the enjoyment factor. If the flaws in one of the older tales interfered with your pleasure where there was no interference from a new story, then perhaps the new story simply should be rated above the old one. But if you found yourself enjoying the older tale despite the flaws, then this might not apply.

You know what it was like in the "good ol' days" you're talking about? Well, for one thing, the new reader was very soon introduced in one way or another to the veteran readers, who were constantly muttering about how better the stories were back in the "good ol' days"!

Robert Burros writes from Woodside, New York; "Your editorials and answers to letters are challenging. In addendum to your comments on fans and amateurs who produce their own newsletters, etc., I can only say thanks to God we live in a country where anyone can use this method to 'sound off' his opinions on any topic–even if such reach only a few dozen scattered individuals."

Thanks are in order, but I do not believe that Divine Providence, or anything else, is going to maintain these happy conditions if the thankful continue to permit persons and groups, who are determined to put an end to these conditions, to do so via violence, blackmail, and the use of free speech, etc., for the purpose of destroying free speech.

James Blish writes: "The best thing in #8 for my money was the undelivered del Rey speech . . .

"I am highly in favor of your re-running *Brood of the Dark Moon.* In 1931, I saw only the last installment. Its predecessor was my second favorite in this issue. I vote for the continued use of the old illustrations, too. Even when they were bad, they contributed to the atmosphere which generates nostalgia.

"Though much of what you print only goes to prove that primitive magazine science fiction was indeed *very* primitive, I continue to think you are doing us an important service. Most of this material is utterly unavailable to most of us, except through FSF; and it gives us a chance of considering our history at first hand. If, some day, somebody is going to do a genuinely scholarly history of science fiction, a complete set of *FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION* will be an invaluable aid."

For the benefit of newcomers, this may be a good place to note that generally we do not publish letters in their entirety, and that the presence of an ellipsis (. . .) in a letter indicates copy omitted between that point and the next sentence or next paragraph published. (When the letter writer himself or herself includes ellipses, we change this to dashes, or perhaps make a paragraph break, in order to avoid confusing the signals.)

The approval of Lester del Rey's complete Guest-of-Honor speech was nearly unanimous.

Gene D. D'Orsogna writes from Stony Brook, New York: "After tearing my hair out over Henry Jame's *The Ambassadors* for a summer here at S.B. University, and getting twelve inferiority complexes in the process,

it was a distinct pleasure to take up FSF #8. One cannot appreciate a simply structured sentence until one has been bludgeoned by the verbose Mr. James (who obviously needed prunes--a double helping) . . .

"A million thanks for reprinting Mr. de Rey's speech, *Art or Artiness?* It gives authoritative substance to what I have long believed to be true. I have seen these self-styled geniuses on various 'talk' shows on the idiot box, who are oh-so-careful to show their personal affectations (ill-fitting jockey-shorts, pipe fashioned in the likeness of Edna May Oliver, etc.) as well as give the back of their hands to pre-Campbellian science fiction. After which, they invariably tout their current book--this is fine, but all too often I have found that the emperor has no clothes, merely--well, as I said, Mr. del Rey put it most eloquently.

Ed Hunter writes from Santa Fe Springs, California: "The article about First Fandom was very interesting. I hope you will continue to have articles along this line. At the end the article, you had an address for an application to FF. Well, I wrote for an application and never heard anything from them."

Since "fanning" is a spare time proposition, it often happens that any particular person who is involved with a project like being secretary to a club, publishing an amateur magazine, etc., will be caught up in personal matters which just do not allow him to take care of current project business promptly. If you haven't heard by now, a gentle reminder to that effect would not be out of order.

The authors of the last few letters were among the large majority of readers responding who voted "yes" to our question about reprinting *Brood of the Dark Moon* as a series of novelets, and some stressed the point, "even if it does have to be reworked somewhat". Since the author is no longer with us, I should have to do the needful carpentry myself.

The matter cannot be acted upon, however, until such time as we go back to a regular schedule, because even such carpentry as can be done without damage is not really going to conceal the fact that this had been a four-part serial. It will be a series with elements unresolved at the end of each story until the last; the carpentry will only tend to soften the jagged edges of the cliff somewhat, and true synposes into the text of the next story.

To have only the final installment of a four-part serial in the old Clayton *Astounding Stories* back in 1931 was a sad plight indeed, by the way. *Amazing Stories* and *Wonder Stories* always gave synopses with the concluding part of a serial, but Editor Bates (and Editor Tremaine after him) carefully negelected to do so--very possibly to discourage the practice of buying only the issue containing the final part. I thought it very mean of both of them, at the time, for those were the Great Depression days, in which I often had to let earlier installments go by the board. (Of course, you may be sure that somehow I managed to get back issues later!) And while, as an editor now, I can appreciate Bates' and Tremaine's reasons for so doing, I still think it was a very mean practice. RAWL

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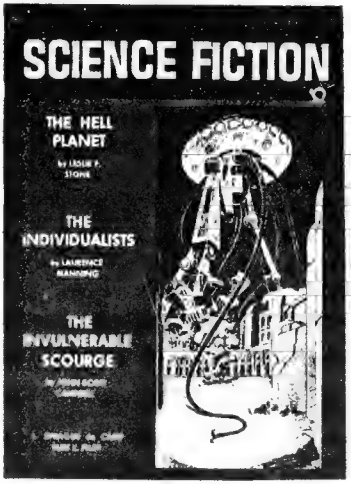

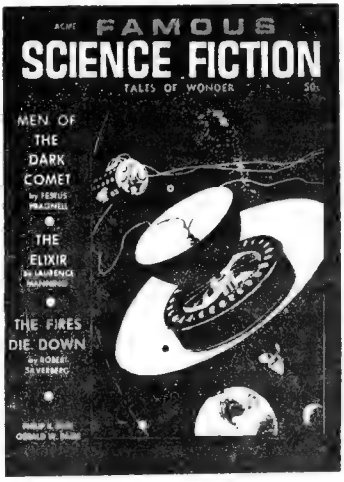

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